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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program designed to empower students through the use of the democratic classroom to improve students' attitudes toward school. Targeted population consisted of sixth grade students in a growing middle class community, located in a major midwestern city. The problem of poor student attitude was documented through data gathered from student attitude surveys and student reflection journals. A review of solution strategies through literature named these categories for intervention: addressing social issues, addressing student attitude, addressing student attendance, and increasing student decision-making opportunities. Students were administered two types of attitude surveys the first week of school. These surveys provided both qualitative and quantitative data to be used as baseline measurements. Surveys were re-administered in December to ascertain if change occurred regarding student attitudes toward school. In addition, attendance records for the first and second quarters of fourth and fifth grade were compared to the attendance records of the targeted sixth grade students to determine other potential benefits of having a democratic classroom. Post-intervention data indicated an increase in students' desire to be involved in the decision-making process through democratically run classroom meetings. A strong interest in academic choice involving multiple intelligences was also indicated. Appended are: sample student reflection journal and attitude surveys; weekly lesson plans; and student-led conference lesson plans. (Contains 21 references, 24 figures, and 3 tables.) (Author/BT)

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EMPOWERING STUDENTS THROUGH THE USE OF THE DEMOCRATIC CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program designed to empower students through the use of the democratic classroom in order to improve students' attitudes toward school. The targeted population consisted of sixth grade students in a growing, middle class community, located in a major midwestern city. The problem of poor student attitude was documented through data gathered from student attitude surveys and student reflection journals.

A review of solution strategies through literature named these categories for intervention: addressing social issues, addressing student attitude, addressing student attendance, and increasing student decision-making opportunities. Implementing a democratic classroom fits two of the above categories: addressing social issues and increasing decision-making opportunities.

Students will be administered two types of attitude surveys the first week of school. These surveys will provide both quantitative and qualitative data to be used as baseline measurements. The surveys will be re-administered in December to ascertain if change has occurred regarding student attitudes toward school. In addition, attendance records for the first and second quarters of fourth and fifth grade will be compared to the attendance records of the targeted sixth grade students. This will be done to determine other potential benefits of having a democratic classroom.

Post intervention data indicated an increase in students' desire to be involved in the decision-making process through democratically run classroom meetings. A strong interest in academic choice involving multiple intelligences was also indicated.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTENT

General Statement of the Problem

Some students of the targeted sixth grade classes repeatedly exhibit poor attitudes toward school due to a lack of empowerment. Evidence for the existence of this problem includes student attitude surveys, teacher attitude survey, and student reflection journals.

Immediate Problem Context

This study will be conducted among sixth grade students attending a middle school located in a western suburb of a major midwestern city. The total enrollment is 862 sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. The sixth grade population is approximately 300 students, with an average of 26 students per classroom. Of this population, 63.8% are bused.

This school, built in 1968, is a one-story brick building that has undergone several additions and renovations within the last five years. It is located in a residential area surrounded by a park, two baseball fields and a creek. The public library is within two blocks of the school, and the city and police departments are within four blocks.

The sixth grade subjects of this study occupy a newer section of the building and are somewhat isolated from the seventh and eighth grade students. In addition to the general education classes, enrichment and remedial services are provided as needed. Students participate in physical education on a daily basis and take part in related arts on a six-week rotation. Courses included in the related arts rotation include: music, art, health, technology, home life, and Junior Great Books. The school houses a computer lab containing thirty computers with Internet access for student use. Each classroom has a minimum of one computer as well as a presentation television allowing for instructional use. The facility also supports numerous enrichment extra-curricular activities including drama, chess, and science clubs, sports teams, band, student council, chorus, as well as before and after school child care which the local park district operates.

Total enrollment for the district is 5,118 students ranging from kindergarten through eighth grade. The major racial-ethnic groups are: White non-Hispanic, 75.3%, Black non-Hispanic, 3.0%, Hispanic, 7.0%, and Asian/Pacific Islander, 14.7%. Low-income students who may be eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches are approximately 1.7%. Limited-English-proficient students, who are eligible for transitional bilingual education, represent approximately 3.0% of the student population. The attendance rate is 95.8%, with a mobility rate of 6.3%. Chronic truancy is 0.0%. This information also represents the demographics of the targeted school.

The team of administrators for the school district is comprised of a superintendent and three assistant superintendents. Each middle school has a principal

along with two assistant principals. The elementary buildings are led by building principals, with the two larger buildings also having an assistant principal. The racial/ethic background of teachers in this district, including all school personnel categorized by the district as classroom teachers, is as follows: White 99.6%, and Black, 0.4%. Females represent 89.5% of the district staff, and males represent 10.5%. The average years of teaching experience in the school is 9.7 years with 50.5% of the teachers possessing a bachelor's degree and 49.5% having earned a master's degree or higher. The average teacher's salary is $40,310 and the average administrator's salary is $82,938. (School Report Card, 1999)

The following results were taken from the Stanford Achievement Test administered in 1999: 80% of sixth grade students met or exceeded national norms in the areas of mathematics and science; 76% of sixth grade students met or exceeded national norms in language arts; and 79% of sixth grade students met or exceeded national norms in the area of social studies.

Students, staff, and parents completed the Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey (CSMpact) and data from this survey showed: Students and staff feel very positive about their learning environment; staff involvement in the shared decision- making process is improving; students enjoy their core classes of mathematics, science, reading, and social studies; and, the overall rating of this school has increased over last year's survey for all stakeholder groups (students, staff, and parents). (Planned Improvement for the School and District, 1998/1999)

Currently, the strategic directions and initiatives for the next three years include creating a democratic classroom approach in order to maximize the academic, social, and emotional potential of each student. (School Improvement Plan, 2000-2001)

The Surrounding Community

The following tables represent the allocation of monies for the district of the targeted school.

Table 1

School District's Finances - Expenditure By Fund

Education	$19,748,543
Operations and Maintenance	$3,671,891
Transportation	$1,503,380
Bond and Interest	$2, 551, 871
Municipal Retirement/Social Security	$503,042
Site & Construction/Capital Improvement	$48,166
TOTAL	$28,026,893

Table 2

School District's Finances – Expenditure by Function

Instruction	$13,605197
General Administration	$451,514
Supporting Services	$8,680,026
Other Expenditures	$5,390,156

The village in which the school district is located is to home to more than 540 businesses and industries and approximately 40,000 residents living in 12,000 dwellings. Because of the large amount of industrial and commercial business, the village does not impose a municipal tax on its residents. Approximately 40,000 people reside in the village. Of these residents, 78.5% are White; 4.2% are African-American; 11.2% are Asian, and other races make up the remaining 6.1%. The average household income is approximately $72,723, and the per-capita income is $25,467. The average selling price for single-family homes is $160,000. Police officers conduct drug and gang awareness programs for fifth and sixth graders, local businesses participate in Junior Achievement building a community-school relationship, and the public library offers a summer reading programs for all ages. Parents work in conjunction with the school in a variety of ways, including curriculum development, running the Parent Teacher Association, and supporting school fund-raising efforts. The local park district provides numerous activities for families, including baseball,

soccer, football, basketball, and tennis. There are numerous playgrounds, walking and bike paths, picnic pavilions, fishing areas, and gardens, along with two public swimming pools. Due to the lack of a central downtown area, a newly constructed outdoor facility provides residents with the opportunity for social gatherings.

National Context of the Problem

The challenge of promoting positive attitudes toward learning, enhancing students' self-esteem and motivating students to be more effective and productive might be accomplished through the same educational goal. This goal is to help students become active, critical, and involved, and is based upon the assumption that students will achieve success if they take a greater responsibility for their own learning. Teachers may be able to force students to complete an assignment, but cannot coerce them to learn effectively or to care about their responsibilities.

Today, students are rarely invited to become active participants in their own education. Schooling is typically about doing things to children, not working with them. An array of punishments and rewards is used to enforce compliance with an agenda that students rarely have any opportunity to create. Establishing a democratic classroom helps improve students' individual rights and influence. It has a positive effect on the general well being of a student, affects behavior and values, academic achievement, and their intrinsic motivation (Kohn, 1993).

Democratic classrooms allow children to participate, individually and collectively, in making decisions. This promotes a productive learning environment. It also

encourages a proactive approach to possible problems and supports peaceful conflict resolution. According to Kohn (1993), this provides several advantages. It helps children feel respected by making it clear that their opinions matter; it builds a sense of belonging and community; and it contributes to the development of social and cognitive skills such as perspective taking (imaging how the world looks to someone else). According to Landau (2000), research consistently shows a decrease in dropout rates, acts of violence and office referrals, and an increase in daily attendance in classrooms under democratic management.

Detachment and lack of interest, or insensitivity and antagonism, are thought to cause "burnout" among students. The best predictor of burnout is not too much work, too little time, or too few rewards. Rather, it is powerlessness, or a lack of control over what one is doing. According to Kohn (l993), anyone who truly values democracy ought to be thinking about preparing students to participate in a democratic culture. The only way children can acquire both the skills of decision-making and the preference to use them is if their experiences are maximized with choice and negotiation. Teachers, however, must encourage students to understand that rights in a democracy must be balanced with societal responsibilities. This framework gives students opportunities to practice exercising their own rights while understanding needs of others to be safe, healthy, and undisrupted.

Rodero (1995) sought to educate children in a democratic way, with the school acting in partnership with society outside of the school. She sought to bridge the gap

between school knowledge and real-world problems by bringing the world into the school and the school out into the world.

> We cannot expect children to accept ready-made values and truths all the way through school, and then suddenly make choices in adulthood. Likewise, we cannot expect them to be manipulated with reward and punishment in school, and to have the courage of a Martin Luther King in adulthood (Kamii, 1991, p. 387).

Administrators and teachers who resist giving their students the chance to make decisions worry that students will use their time unproductively. These administrators and teachers believe the students need structure and guidance. Time constraints present a problem as well. How will teachers and students get anything accomplished when a decision of "What do we want to do?" always takes place?

Unavoidable time constraints should not be used to rationalize unnecessary dictatorial practices. No matter how well intentioned, these practices establish an unhealthy distance between students and teachers. Teachers, however, must examine the overall objectives for a class and the needs and expectations for their students. They then can provide parameters, within which decisions can be negotiated. This is actually more work for teachers, rather than less, but the benefits of giving students the opportunity to make arguments, solve problems, and listen to alternative choices can be a great motivator.

Brunson (1996, p.8) indicated, "Our role as teachers is profoundly redefined through an empowering philosophy of education. It teaches us that we must relinquish our traditional task of merely redistributing information in favor of a more constructive role—one that facilitates the creation of learning. It is our contention, therefore, that if we can 'trust' the process—that is, if we can 'enable,' 'allow,' and 'permit'– then learning will occur for us and for our students."

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document the extent of poor student attitudes toward school, at the site of the investigation, student attitude surveys and reflection journals will be administered prior to the introduction of the democratic classroom. In addition, teacher attitude surveys will be administered in order to determine the need for a democratic environment.

The teacher-researchers created and administered a student attitude survey (Appendix A) focusing on various aspects of the classroom experience for sixth grade. The teacher-researchers administered the survey to the students in the three targeted sixth grade classrooms on the first day of school. The categories in the survey included rapport with the teacher, comfort in the classroom, choice in learning activities, respectful environment, and appropriate work level. The students were given a written survey of 15 questions and were asked to respond, "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," or "strongly disagree" to each question. Figure 1 shows the results of the student survey grouped by category of response.

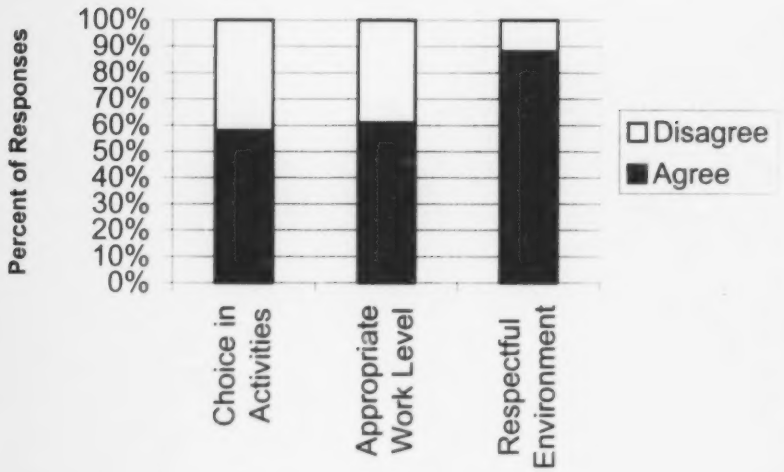

Figure 1. Results of student attitude survey, August 2001.

Figure 1 shows the results of the student attitude survey administered in August 2001. The students were given the choices of strongly disagree, disagree, strongly agree, and agree. By grouping the results into categories of disagree and agree, the results show 58% of the students surveyed believe they have a choice in assignments and activities compared to 42% who indicate they do not have a choice. In addition, 61% of the students surveyed believe the work assigned is at an appropriate level, while 39% of the students believe the work level is either too difficult or too easy. Finally, 88% of the students indicate there is a respectful atmosphere in the classroom, whereas 12% believe the level of respect is unacceptable.

Providing a choice in learning activities and appropriate levels of work are two ways to empower students. Student responses to both categories indicate that more

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than two-fifths of the students disagree that this is happening in the regular classroom. On average, 41% of the students surveyed indicate a lack of student empowerment.

The teacher-researchers created and administered a teacher-made reflection journal (Appendix B) focusing on various aspects of the classroom for sixth grade. The topics in the survey included importance of regular attendance, things that made school enjoyable, the benefit of classroom meetings, selecting classroom rules, and selecting classroom assignments. The students were asked to answer five open-ended questions relating to the stated topics.

The teacher-researchers administered the reflection journal to the students in the three targeted sixth grade classrooms. The students completed the journals on the first day of school prior to the introduction of the democratic classroom. Figures 2 – 6 show the summaries of the reflection journal responses.

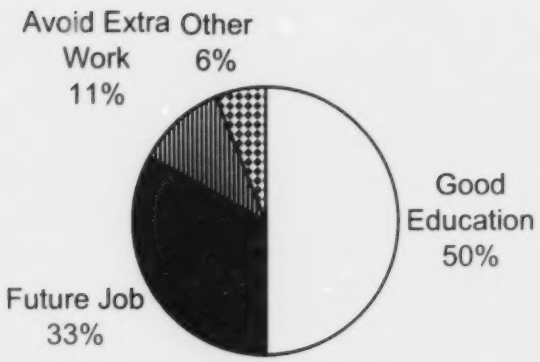

Figure 2. Student responses from reflection journal question 1: Why is it important to come to school on a daily basis?

Figure 2 shows the results of question 1 from the student reflection journal completed August 2001. The results show 50% of the students feel it is important to come to school to receive a good education, 33% indicate future job security as the main reason to come to school, and 11% say avoiding an increased workload due to missing school is a motivating factor in attending school regularly. Finally, 6% give other reasons such as having fun and making use of tax dollars paid by parents.

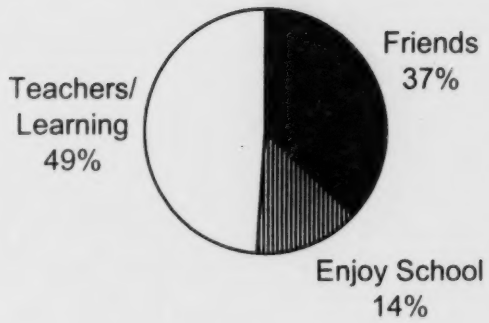

Figure 3. Student responses from reflection journal question 2: What are the things that make it enjoyable to come to school?

Figure 3 shows the results of question 2 from the reflection journal completed August 2001. Of the students surveyed, 49% feel teachers and learning make it enjoyable to come to school, 37% indicate friends were the most enjoyable part of school, and 14% of the students simply enjoy school.

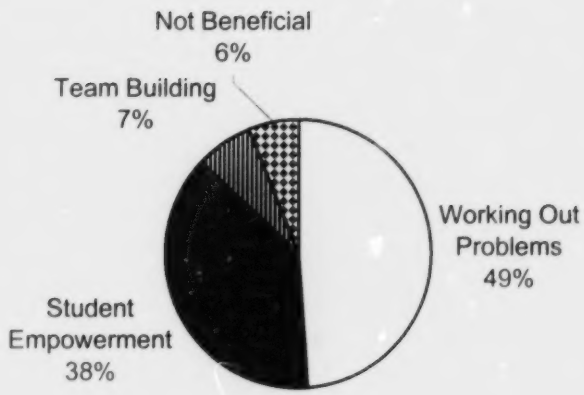

Figure 4.Student responses from reflection journal question 3: How do you feel class meetings would be helpful to you?

Figure 4 shows the results of question 3 from the reflection journal completed August 2001. For this question, 49% of the students surveyed feel class meetings would be beneficial to work out problems. An additional 38% believe class meetings would encourage student empowerment, and 7% of the students believe class meetings would promote team building. The remaining 6% of the students surveyed indicate they do not feel class meetings would be beneficial.

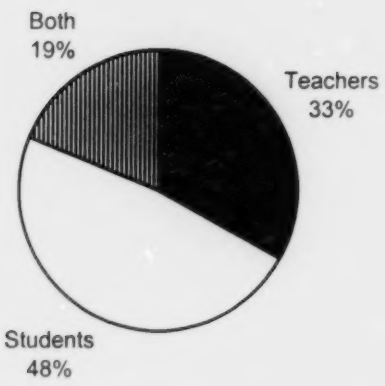

Figure 5. Student responses from reflection journal question 4: Who should be responsible for making the classroom rules, teachers or students?

Figure 5 shows the results of question 4 from the reflection journal completed August 2001. Of the students surveyed, 48% feel students should be responsible for making the classroom rules, whereas, 33% of the students believe the teachers should have this responsibility. The remaining 19% of the students surveyed believe both teachers and students should be involved in developing the classroom rules.

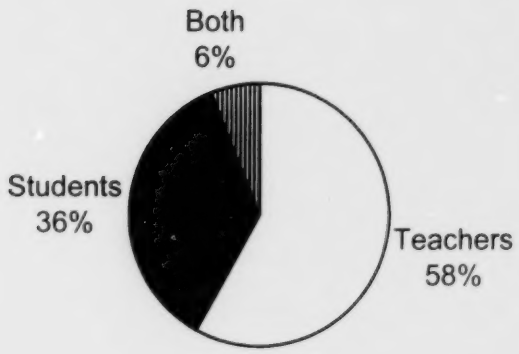

Figure 6. Student responses from reflection journal question 5: Who should be responsible for selecting the classroom assignments, teachers or students?

Figure 6 shows the results of question 5 from the reflection journal completed August 2001. Results from this question show 58% of the students believe teachers should select assignments, while 36% of the students surveyed feel they should select assignments. Only 6% feel both teachers and students should participate in selecting classroom assignments.

On average, 68% of the students surveyed express an interest in student empowerment in the areas of classroom meetings, creation of classroom rules, and choice in learning activities, compared to an average of 32% who do not show an interest in these areas. The results of the student reflection journals indicate students

wish to be empowered in the classroom. The results of the student attitude survey show students surveyed do not feel that they are being empowered at this time.

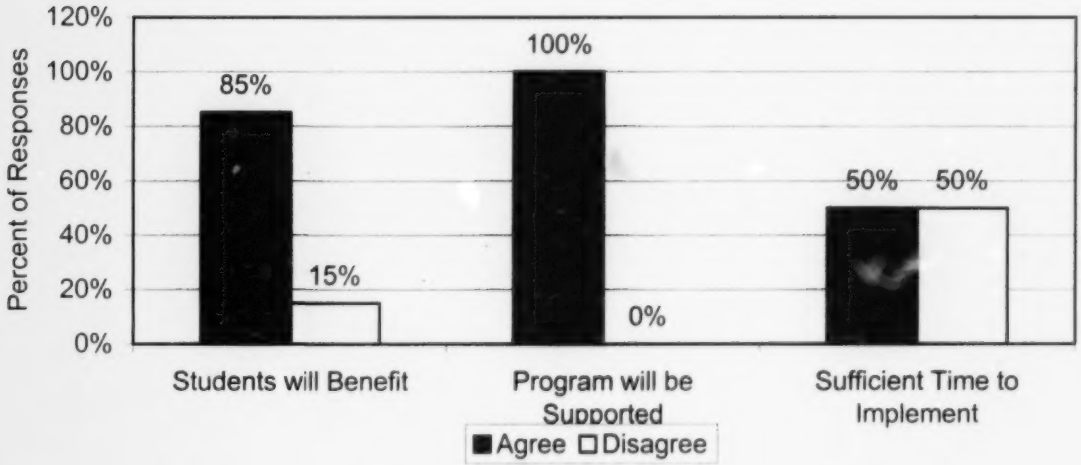

Figure 7. Results of teacher attitude survey, August 2001.

Figure 7 shows the results of the teacher attitude survey (Appendix A) administered in August 2001. In this survey, 85% of the teachers surveyed believe that the democratic form of classroom management is beneficial to students, and 100% believe parents and administrators would support this type of program. Of the teachers surveyed, 50% expressed concern over having sufficient time to implement this strategy. These results indicate that teachers acknowledge the value of the democratic classroom even though it is not currently being implemented in the targeted school.

Probable Causes

Students' motivation to learn is influenced by their self-perception. If they have been unsuccessful in school in the past, and attribute their poor academic performance to a lack of ability, a negative attitude toward school can result. Worsham (1993) believes that children's self-perception will impact how others perceive them. If children are confident that their ideas are good ones and will be respected, they probably will be respected. If students' perceptions of themselves are poor, others will see them as weak and believe that their ideas have little worth. Poor self-concept is directly related to achievement. Poor self-concept may cause students to refuse to try a task due to fear of failing. It can create anxiety, and lead to disappointments, frustrations, and discipline problems (Beyer, 1987).

Authoritarian classrooms allow for one-way communication. Research suggests that this actually interferes with cognitive processing, thus inhibiting students from becoming critical and creative thinkers. Kohn (1994) believes that if teachers establish the rules, they are engaging in his concept of a disempowering dynamic in their classrooms. These teachers are trying to manipulate students by not allowing them to be a part of the classroom setting. Students will try to avoid the rules that they do not see as beneficial.

Likewise, a competitive environment can discourage students in their academic efforts, as well as have a negative impact on their attitudes. (Hendrix, 1996). Many students experience stress when forced to compare their abilities with others. Students whose method of learning does not fit in with the instructional

environment may incorrectly perceive themselves as less intelligent. This frustration can lead to disruptive behavior. Being labeled "the class clown" is a better alternative than being seen as "dumb." This unhealthy environment diminishes learning for everyone.

According to Vadeboncoeur (1996), many students have goals that are not the same as their teachers; therefore, the students' goals become irrelevant. According to Glasser (1984), the adversarial teacher-student relationship may start as early as first grade. Any child who does not do what the teacher says is reprimanded, and the coercion begins. Children know when they are being coerced, and their main agenda may become resistance. The power struggle between teacher and student escalates and education becomes secondary. The child learns less and resists more, and the teacher coerces more and teaches less. Glasser indicated that the use of rewards tends to reduce the adversarial atmosphere, but the control still remains in the hands of the teacher. Research has shown that educators fail to understand that motivation to learn comes from within. Teachers who thrive on coercion believe in the virtue of "no pain, no gain," and do not worry if their instruction is boring. They do not realize that boredom is the enemy of quality.

Freinet (1970) makes the analogy that teachers make deposits which students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the investment concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing and storing deposits. Freinet continues by saying that all this does is put a gulf between the teacher and the students. If students cannot have

choice in their learning, they cannot enlarge their position to be entrusted with the responsibility for their own learning (Freinet's study as cited in Rodero, Temple, 1995, p.58).

In conclusion, the evidence at the school site showed that children do not feel empowered in the classroom, which can lead to negative attitudes toward school. The evidence also showed that children have a desire to be empowered in the classroom through the decision-making process, choice in assignments, and creating classroom guidelines. The literature indicated that children's academic achievement, motivation to learn, and attitudes could suffer when in a power struggle with a teacher for empowerment. The literature also indicated that teachers have difficulty in giving control over to their students. The current system of rewards, which is often used in the classroom for certain student behavior, is not beneficial to the learning process.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Building a democratic classroom environment today is essential because of the diversity of American schools. The United States has a complex population of many races, religions, and beliefs. According to Meier (1993, both teachers and students need to find a way to work across ideological, historical, and personal differences to develop a type of solidarity in which everyone's opinions are respected. Vadaboncoeur (1996) believes that students need to improve their tolerance for racial, ethnic, cultural, socio-economic and gender diversity to reduce their biases. One method to accomplish this task is to create good citizenship early in a child's life. A democratic environment, according to Landau (2000), gives students the opportunity to exercise their own rights while understanding that they have the responsibility to protect the rights and needs of others. All students should be safe, exist in a healthy environment, and have the freedom to be themselves. Pearl & Knight (1999) said the world is faced with difficult problems that cannot be solved without a democratic process, and this needs to be learned early.

Creating a democratic classroom means involving students in decision-making and developing a social system that is fair. Student involvement should be made on a regular basis. It is through this empowerment that students learn responsibility, develop respect for social values, engage in solving interpersonal problems, and as a result, learn lifelong skills. Students should be able to participate, individually and collectively in choosing the type of classroom they would like to have. According to Kohn (in Phi Delta Kappan, 1993), self-determination bolsters higher self-esteem and a greater feeling of academic competence.

There are two major components of a democratic classroom. One component is providing academic choices, which serve as instruments for learning, planning, evaluating, and problem solving. The second component is daily classroom meetings, which are used as a vehicle for character development.

In a democratic classroom, the student has a choice of a variety of learning experiences using differentiated material and employing multiple intelligences. Howard Gardner (1993) said, "The biggest mistake of past centuries in teaching has been to treat all children as if they were variants of the same individual, and thus to feel justified in teaching them the same subjects the same way" (p. 133). Gardner also formulated a theory proposing an alternative to the traditional view of intelligence as measured on an IQ test. He theorized that human potential encompasses visual/spatial, mathematical/logical, musical, kinesthetic, as well as interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences. He believed that the multiple intelligences theory would allow people to assess the talents of the whole individual. Thus students could more

easily acquire the basic skills and meet the standards required of public school, but they are also able to take advantage of their personal and creative talents in the process (White, Blythe, and Gardner, 1992).

Choice in assignments to achieve a particular academic goal allows for more student success, increases motivation, and contributes positively to a child's self-concept. According to research, placing the student at the center of the learning process and paying close attention to personality development and esteem for self, if done properly, enhances learning in the academic as well as in the personal domain (Joyce, Weil, Calhoun, 2000). A study at Yale University with 3rd through 8th graders determined that instruction involving a combination of analytical, creative and practical methods of instruction surpassed the traditional rote, memory-based teaching technique (Educational Psychology, 2001).

Babbage (1999) concluded that in an attempt to keep students on task, teachers develop the habit of relying on classroom activities that bore students into submissive compliance. In sharp contrast to this, teachers need to expect that high student interest in academic subjects may lend itself to more enthusiastic reactions. Tomlinson (1999) expects there to be humor along with creativity in the classroom. She feels humor stems from making unexpected and pleasurable connections, and students must have the freedom to be spontaneous. Student choice, along with teacher coaching, provides them with an opportunity to reach this level of enthusiasm. Elkind & Sweet (1997) caution classroom teachers from using pre-

programmed curriculums and fill-in-the-blank activities, as these do not lend themselves to spontaneity.

Rodero & Temple (1995) state, "...the stuff of traditional schooling is a waste of precious effort and opportunity because it makes little difference to the way students approach real problems in the real world" (p. 4). Students need to be exposed to the requisite skills, both cognitive and social, that will better prepare them for the challenges they will face outside of the classroom.

Developing an empowering classroom presents a dual challenge, according to Brunson & Vogt (1996). Teachers need to relax the power that often encourages them to treat students as learners incapable of critical thought. Administrators need to follow an empowering philosophy although there are norms and other constraints that limit academic and instructional flexibility. Educators must relinquish their traditional role of "redistributing information in favor of a more constructive role - one that facilitates the creation of learning" (p. 10).

Tomlinson (1999) addresses the issue of creating a healthy classroom. She questions what sort of things a teacher would do to create an environment in which both teachers and students continually grow in respect and caring for one another. Daily classroom meetings help in this endeavor. A class meeting emphasizes interactive discussion among all the students. Piaget (in The Differentiated Classroom, Tomlinson, 1999) asked,

> How are we to bring to the spirit of citizenship and humanity which is postulated by democratic societies? It is unbelievable that at a time when

democratic ideas enter into every phase of life, they should have been so little utilized as instruments of education (p. 11).

Daily classroom meetings allow students to participate in a form of the democratic process. In addition, teachers get to know each of their students, and students get to know and care about each other. Many skills are reinforced through daily discussions such as listening, communication, problem solving, decision-making, planning, respect, and character development. Class meetings help children to learn democracy through experience. Supportive communication involves messages that are multileveled (verbal, nonverbal, metamessage) and are honest. A safe atmosphere frees individuals to express themselves authentically, without fear of judgment or rejection (Brunson, 1996).

Character development grows with learning to listen, being respectful, and understanding others' perspectives. According to Elkind & Sweet (1997), young people need a forum to express their thoughts, but they also need to be trained to become respectful listeners of diverse opinions. They believe that the best place to learn this skill is in school. They believe that good classroom discussions lay the groundwork for democratic participation throughout life, giving students a sense of power within a community. Freedom to express ideas, opinions, and suggestions should be encouraged. Lickona (1991) believes that teachers should use a Socratic approach to encourage discussion, asking investigative questions in order that students can go beyond just giving their opinions. The democratic classroom incorporates this philosophy. Students who are encouraged to think strategically and

reflectively have a greater self-awareness, and this encourages a more positive attitude toward school. Lickona believes teachers are still in charge, because they bear the responsibility for students' safety, welfare, and learning. However, through the class meeting, students are given an important educational experience, and it is with their collective intelligence.

A 1990 survey revealed that U.S. students have very little knowledge regarding the democratic environment in which they live, including that they have a representative democracy and that Congress makes the laws (Lickona, 1991). Schools should prepare students for democratic citizenship. Classroom meetings can allow students to experience elections, plan or influence curriculum decisions and the running of classrooms and the school, and enact rules that are useful in promoting social behavior. It is important to show a relationship between rights and responsibilities.

Research shows that empowering students has numerous benefits. Students have the opportunity to learn responsibility, develop respect for social values, learn tolerance for others' ideas, improve decision-making skills, and obtain a greater self-awareness. The use of the democratic classroom will empower students by allowing them to establish classroom guidelines, conduct daily meetings in order to build character and address classroom problems, and have a choice in their learning activities.

The democratic classroom encourages student empowerment through decision-making, critical thinking, reflection, and recognizing multiple viewpoints. The

environment should provide opportunities for discourse, so that students can listen, discuss, debate, and come to their own conclusions on issues. While encouraging critical thinking and reflection, there is a safety net for students to try new ideas, perhaps fail, but then feel supported and confident enough to try again (Beyer, 1987).

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of implementing the philosophy of the democratic classroom, during the period of September 2001 to December 200l, three sixth grade classes will increase their motivation to learn through heightened student empowerment, as measured by student attitude surveys and reflection journals. Attendance histories will be compared during this period to determine an additional benefit from the democratic classroom intervention.

In order to accomplish the project objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Researchers will develop multiple intelligences units in order to provide opportunities for student choice.
2. Researchers will develop and teach lessons focusing on the concepts of a democratic classroom which will include instruction in development of a class constitution, character education, conducting classroom meetings, communication, and decision- making skills.
3. Students will create a classroom constitution.
4. Students will conduct daily classroom meetings. These meetings will focus on:

a. student problem-solving as it relates to daily classroom events

b. communication and decision-making skills

c. understanding the concept of democracy

d. reinforcing character education

Project Action Plan

The following project action plan will be implemented in the three targeted classrooms from August 2001 through December 2001. The teacher-researchers will develop multiple intelligences units in July 2001, which will be carried out in the fall of 2001. Students will be educated in the democratic process, take part in creating a classroom constitution, and participate in classroom meetings as a way of applying the concept of democracy. Pre-surveys will be given in August 2001 to obtain baseline data. Post-surveys will be administered in December 2001 to identify effects of the implemented plan.

Table 3. Project Action Plan.

Project Objective	Intervention	Targeted Group Behavior	Teacher/ Researcher Behavior	Materials	Time: Frequency and Duration
Empower students through the use of the democratic classroom	Develop multiple intelligences units so that students have a choice in selecting assignments	None	Researchers create, collect, & review material for multiple intelligences units in reading/ language arts & social studies	Content area books, support material, Internet	July and August 2001 during five planning meetings
Empower students through the use of the democratic classroom	Develop lesson plans covering the concepts of developing a class constitution, character education, conducting classroom meeting, communication, and decision-making	None	Researchers create, collect, & review materials for lessons plans covering the concepts of developing a class constitution, character education, conducting classroom meetings, communication, and decision-making	Professional resources for each area to be taught	July and August 2001 during five planning meetings

Project Objective	Intervention	Targeted Group Behavior	Teacher/ Researcher Behavior	Materials	Time: Frequency and Duration
Empower students through the use of the democratic classroom	Administer student attitude survey and reflection journal (baseline data)	Students complete surveys	Researchers administer student attitude survey and reflection journal	Student attitude survey & reflection journal	Week 1 of research project (60 minutes/ 1 day)
Empower students through the use of the democratic classroom	Teach lesson on how to write a class constitution and good decision-making strategies	Students participate in lesson	Researchers present created lesson to targeted group	Lesson plans created by researchers	Week 1 of research project (30 minutes/ day/1day)
Empower students through the use of the democratic classroom	Apply knowledge of writing a class constitution	Students create a class constitution using good decision-making strategies	Researchers facilitate classroom activities	Chart paper, markers, sample constitution	Week 1 of research project (60 minutes/ day/3 days)
Empower students through the use of the democratic classroom	Teach lesson on good communication skills and how to conduct class meetings	Students participate in lesson	Researchers present created lesson to targeted group	Lesson plans created by researchers	Week 2 of research project (60 minutes/ day/1day)

Project Objective	Intervention	Targeted Group Behavior	Teacher/ Researcher Behavior	Materials	Time: Frequency and Duration
Empower students through the use of the democratic classroom	Apply knowledge of conducting class meeting using good communication skills	Students conduct a class meeting to address current classroom issues	Researchers facilitate classroom activities	Meeting agenda as created by students	Weeks 2 – 16 of research project (20 minutes/ day/5 days/ week)
Empower students through the use of the democratic classroom	Teach lessons on character education	Students participate in lesson	Researchers present created lesson to targeted group	Lesson plans created by researchers	Weeks 2 – 3 of research project (45 minutes/ day/5 days)
Empower students through the use of the democratic classroom	Administer student attitude survey and reflection journal (posttest)	Students complete surveys	Researchers administer student attitude survey and reflection journal	Student attitude survey & reflection journal	Week 16 of research project (60 minutes/ 1day)

Methods of Assessment

Four assessment tools will be used in order to obtain data for the purpose of this study. Students will complete a student attitude survey and student reflection journal in August 2001 to acquire baseline data. Both the student attitude survey and student reflection journal will be re-administered as a post-test measure in December 2001. To

determine another possible benefit of the democratic classroom intervention, attendance histories will be obtained from grades four through six for the targeted sixth grade students.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to improve students' attitudes toward school through greater student empowerment. The implementation of democracy in the classroom was selected to provide the opportunity for decision-making and academic choice.

In August 2001, the teacher-researchers met on five occasions to develop lesson plans for the implementation of the democratic classroom philosophy. During those meetings, lesson plans were created for the multiple intelligences units, how to develop a class constitution, character education, communication, decision-making, and classroom meetings (Appendix B).

Student attitude surveys and student reflection journals were administered in the first week. Total administration time was approximately 60 minutes. The results of the surveys and reflection journals provided the teacher-researchers with important baseline data. Week one also included a lesson on how to write a class constitution followed by the actual writing of the constitution. The total time necessary for this portion of the implementation was approximately three and one half hours distributed

over four class periods with three class periods of 60 minutes and one class period of 30 minutes.

The focus of week two was to ensure that all students were knowledgeable in how to conduct a class meeting and how to most effectively communicate with their peers. The initial lesson was one hour of the week; however, the skills addressed at this time were ones that were consistently reinforced throughout the implementation. This reinforcement occurred in the daily 20-minute class meetings, which took place all 16 weeks of the implementation, as well as during other activities in the classroom whenever needed.

Initial character education lessons were presented during class meetings in weeks two and three of the implementation. The lessons were approximately 10 to 15 minutes in length and presented during six of the class meetings. However, as with the communication skills, these topics were woven into numerous other areas of the curriculum. An observation made in week three by the teacher-researchers was reluctance on the part of some students to share their feelings in a group setting. In weeks eight and nine, these same students increased their levels of participation during class discussions. This participation continued throughout the implementation.

Instruction in Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences was conducted during week five as a part of the decision-making process. These lessons consisted of four teaching sessions, each 45 minutes in length. Students completed a survey to help them identify their strongest learning styles and participated in activities related to each intelligence. In the remaining weeks of the implementation, students were provided

with choices in learning activities in the areas of reading, language arts, and social studies. Through classroom presentations, discussions, and projects, students demonstrated a solid understanding of the content presented.

During week 16, the final week of implementation, the teacher-researchers once again administered the student attitude survey and the student reflection journal. These measures supplied the data necessary to determine whether or not a change in students' attitudes had occurred as a result of the implementation.

In the original action plan, student-led conferences were not addressed. However, 12 weeks into the intervention, the teacher-researchers added this component to meet the needs of the students and prepare them for student-parent-teacher conferences. This component consisted of three lessons and was implemented during week 12 for approximately 40 minutes per day over the course of three days (Appendix C).

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of the democratic classroom, students in the targeted classrooms completed attitude surveys and reflection journals in December 2001. The results are shown in Figures 8 – 13.

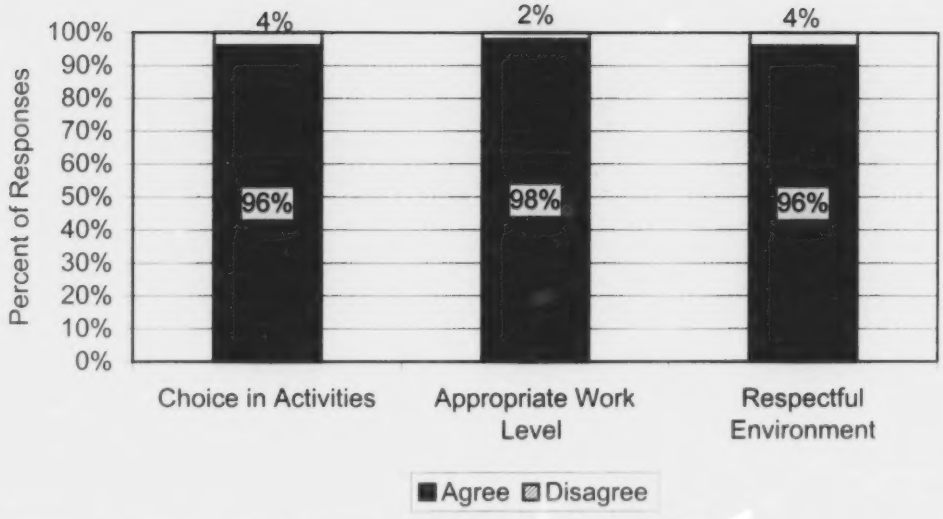

Figure 8. Result of post attitude survey, December 2001.

Figure 8 shows the results of the post attitude survey administered in December 2001. Students were given the following four choices from which to choose: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The results in Figure 8 have been combined into the categories of agree or disagree. In this survey, 96% of the students surveyed believe they have a choice in assignments and activities compared to 4% who indicate they do not have a choice. In addition, 98% of the students surveyed believe the work assigned is at an appropriate level, while 2% of the students believe the work level is either too difficult or too easy. Finally, 96% of the students indicate there is a respectful atmosphere in the classroom, whereas 4% believe the level of respect is unacceptable.

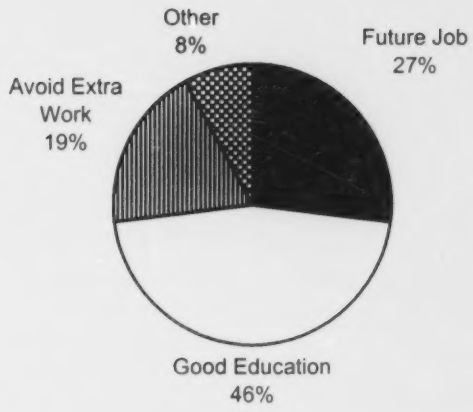

Figure 9. Responses from reflection journal question 1: Why do you think it is important to come to school on a daily basis?

Figure 9 shows the results of question 1 from the reflection journal completed December 2001. The results show 46% of the students feel it is important to come to school to receive a good education, 27% indicate future job security as the main reason to come to school, and 19% state an increased workload due to missing school was a motivating factor in attending school regularly. Finally, 8% believe other reasons such as having fun and eliminating boredom at home.

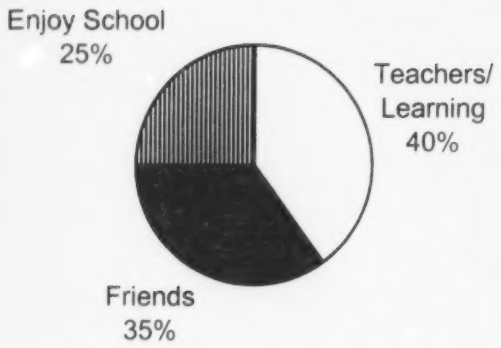

Figure 10. Responses from reflection journal question 2: What are the things that make it enjoyable to come to school?

Figure 10 shows the results of question 2 from the reflection journal completed December 2001. Of the students surveyed, 40% feel teachers and learning make it enjoyable to come to school, 35% indicate friends were the most enjoyable part of school, and 25% of the students simply enjoy school.

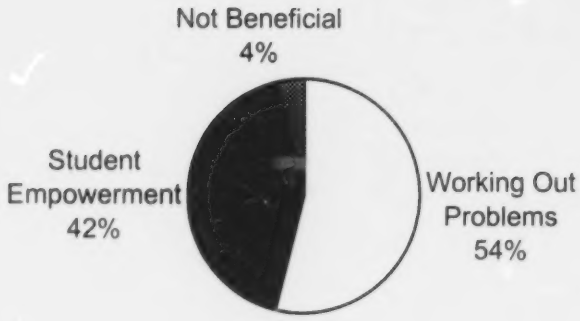

Figure 11. Responses from reflection journal question 3: How do you feel class meetings would be helpful to you?

Figure 11 shows the results of question 3 from the reflection journal completed December 2001. For this question, 54% of the students surveyed feel class meetings would be beneficial to work out problems. An additional 42% believe class meetings encourage student empowerment, and the remaining 4% of the students surveyed indicate they did not feel class meetings would be beneficial.

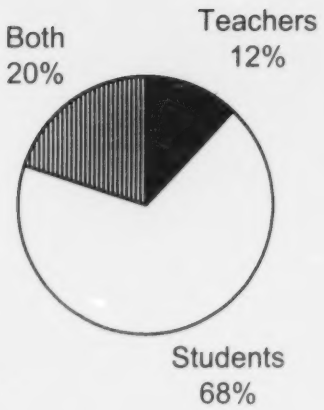

Figure 12. Responses from reflection journal question 4: Who should be responsible for making the classroom rules, teachers or students?

Figure 12 shows the results of question 4 from the reflection journal completed December 2001. Of the students surveyed, 68% feel students should be responsible for making the classroom rules, whereas, 12% of the students believe the teachers should have this responsibility. The remaining 20% of the students surveyed believe both teachers and students should be involved in developing the classroom rules.

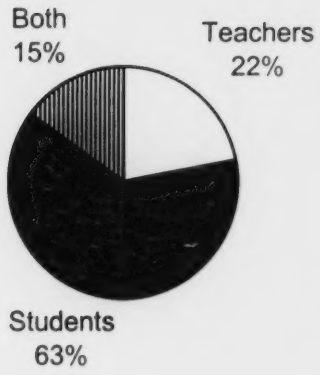

Figure 13. Responses from reflection journal question 5: Who should be responsible for selecting the classroom assignments, teachers or students?

Figure 13 shows the results of question 5 from the reflection journal completed December 2001. Results from this question show 22% of the students believe teachers should select assignments, while 63% of the students surveyed feel they should select assignments. Only 15% feel both teachers and students should participate in selecting classroom assignments.

To determine a possible side effect, attendance records for grades 4, 5, and 6 were obtained and analyzed. The results are shown in Figure 13.

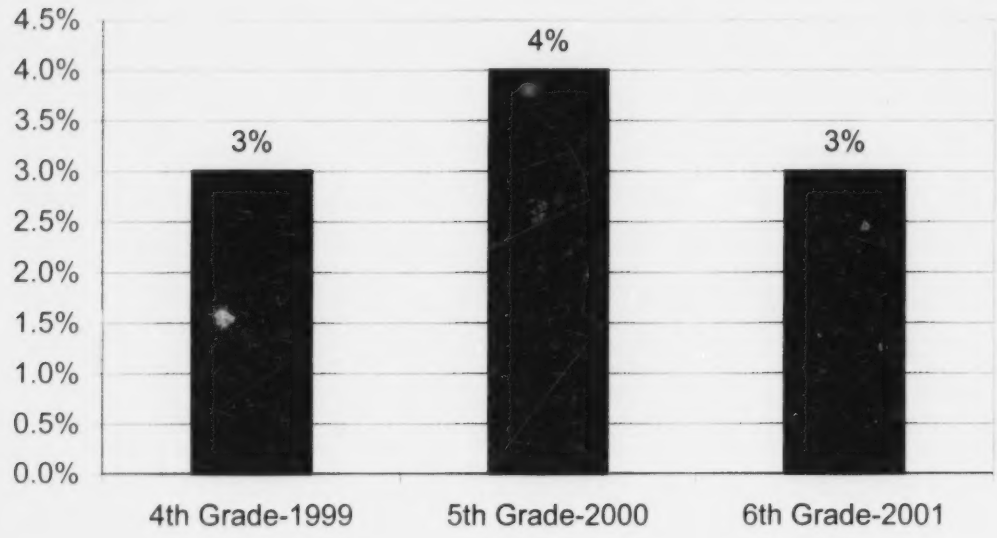

Figure 14. Absentee history for targeted sixth grade students.

Figure 14 shows the attendance history for the targeted sixth grade students. In fourth grade, the students' absentee rate was 4% compared to 5% in fifth grade. During the intervention, the absentee rate for the students was 4%. This represents a decrease of 1% from the previous year.

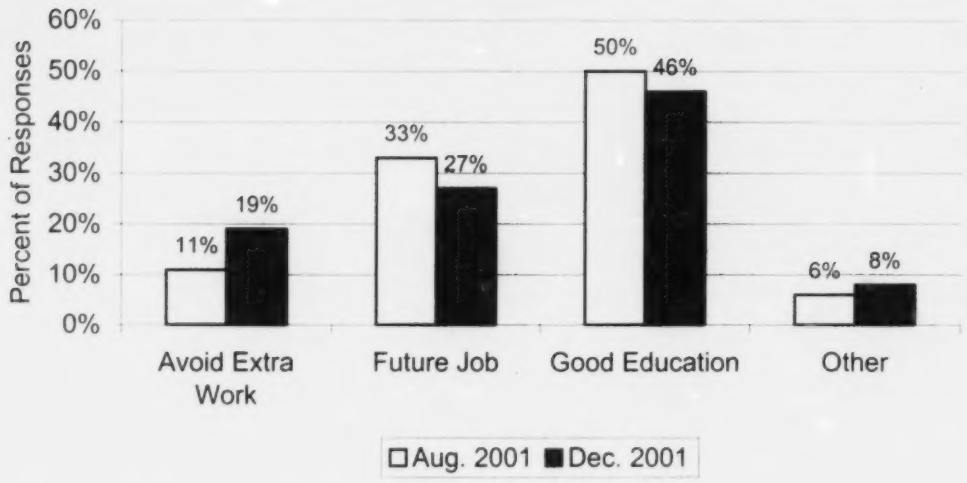

Figure 15. Comparison of responses from reflection journal question 1: Why do you think it is important to come to school on a daily basis?

Figure 15 shows that in the pre survey, 11% of the students believe it is important to come to school on a daily basis to avoid extra work, whereas 19% state this reason in the post survey. This represents an increase of 8%. In the pre survey 33% felt their future job would be affected by their schooling, compared to 27% in the post survey, a decrease of 6%. Of the students surveyed, 50% state receiving a good education was why daily attendance was important compared to 46% of the students in the post-survey. This shows a 4% decrease. Other reasons were stated in the pre and post surveys, 6% and 8% respectively, representing a 2% increase.

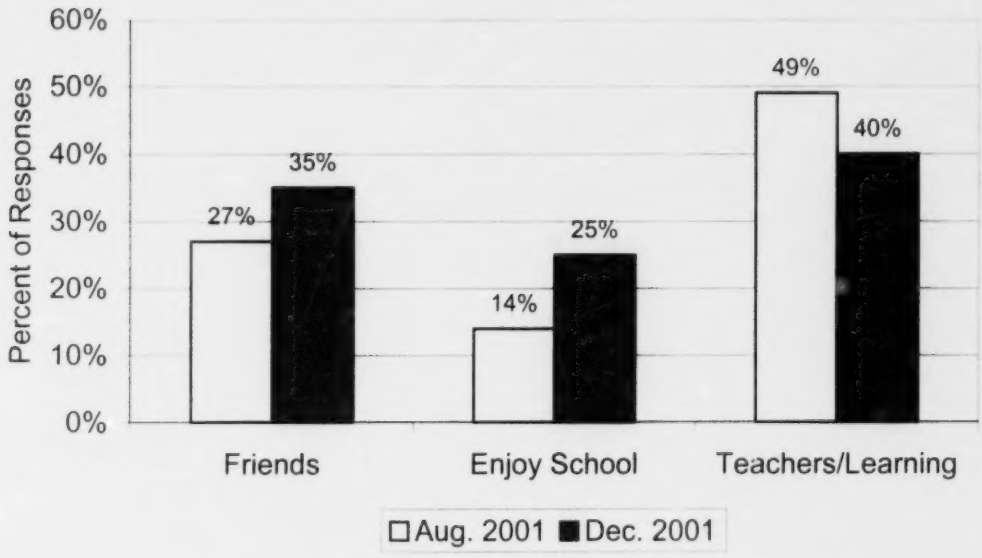

Figure 16. Comparison of reflection journal question 2: What are the things that make it enjoyable to come to school?

Figure 16 shows the comparison of results from reflection journal question 2. When surveyed as to what makes it enjoyable to come to school, three basic responses were given. Being with friends make up 27%of the responses in the pre survey compared to 35% in the post survey, showing an increase of 8%. Simply enjoying school is the response given by 14% of the students in the pre survey, whereas 25% state this reason in the post survey. Of the students surveyed, 49% indicate the teachers and learning in general made school enjoyable in the pre survey, compared to 40% of the students in the post survey. This represents a decrease of 9%.

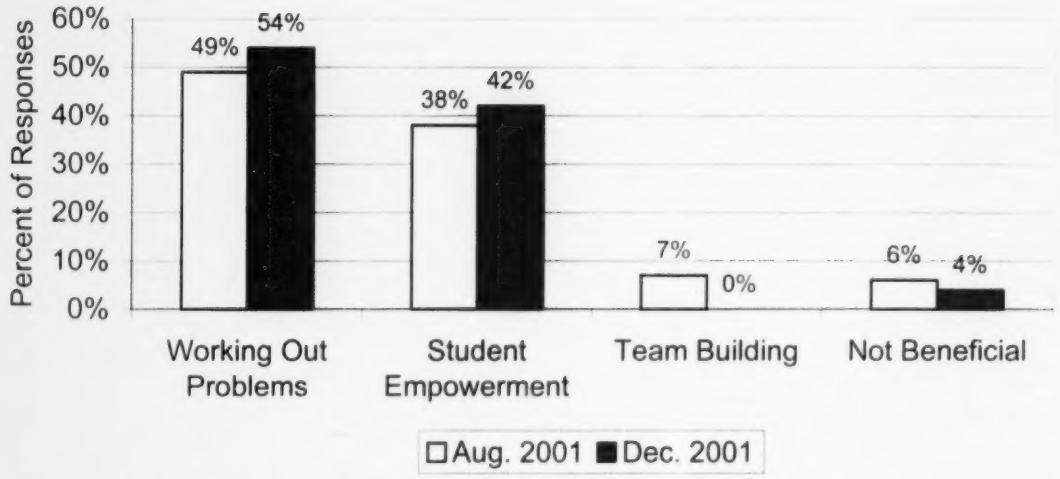

Figure 17. Comparison of refection journal question 3: How do you feel class meetings would be helpful to you?

Figure 17 shows that in the pre survey, 49% of the students believed class meetings would provide the opportunity to work out classroom problems, compared to 54% of the students in the post survey administered in December 2001. This represents an increase of 5%. Student empowerment was the benefit suggested by 38% of the students in the pre survey, whereas 42% stated this reason in the post survey, showing an increase of 4%. Of the students surveyed, the pre survey showed 7% felt team building would be a benefit to class meetings, but 0% gave this reason in the post survey. In both the pre and post surveys, a small percent of students, 6% in the pre survey and 4% in the post survey, felt class meetings would not be beneficial. This represents a decrease of 2%.

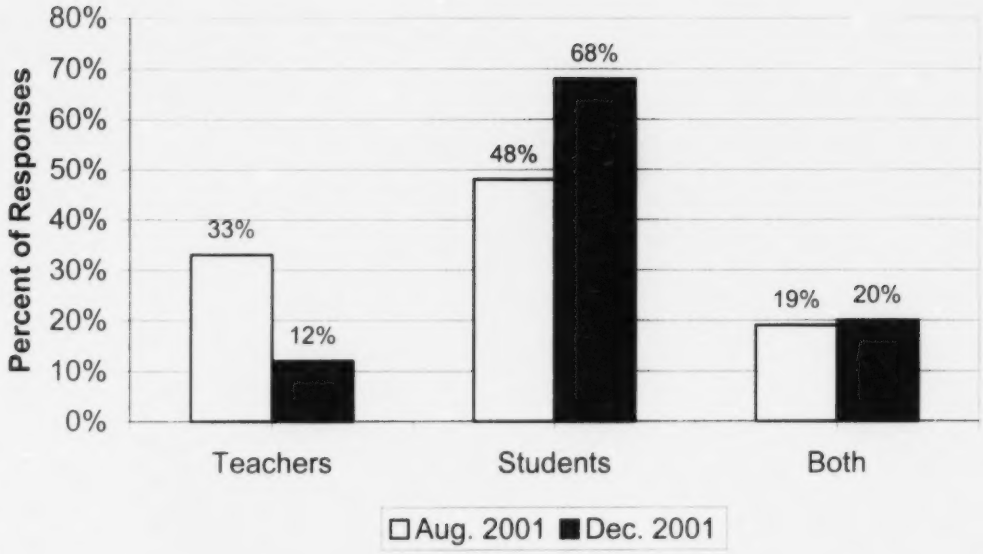

Figure 18. Comparison of reflection journal question 4: Who should be responsible for making the classroom rules, teachers or students?

Figure 18 shows the comparison of reflection journal question 4, which asked students who should be responsible for making the classroom rules. The response of teachers was given by 33% of the students in the pre survey, whereas only 12% of the students felt this to be true in the post survey. This represents a decrease of 21%. Students creating the rules was preferred by 48% of the students in the pre survey compared to 68% in the post survey. This is an increase of 20%. Nearly the same percentage of students in the pre and post surveys felt both students and teachers should be responsible for making classroom rules as shown in the results, 19% and 20% respectively. This represents an increase of 1%.

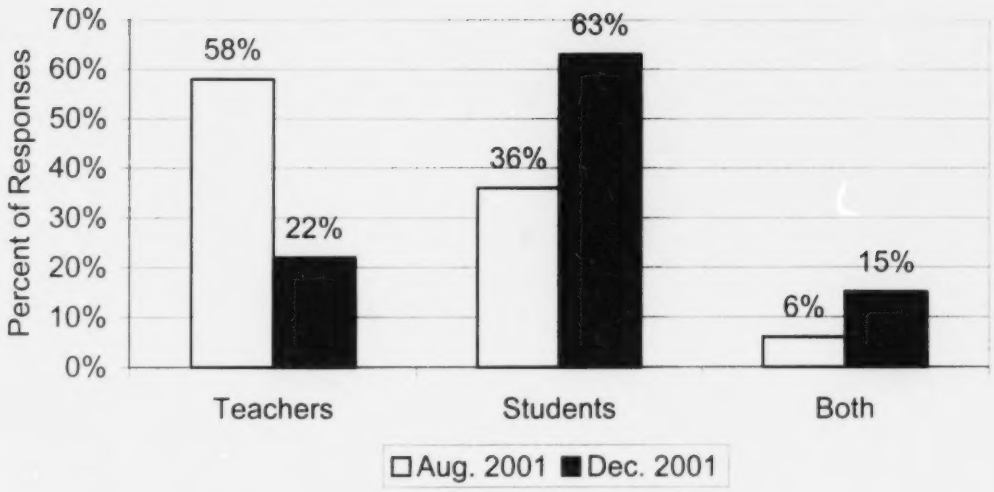

Figure 19. Comparison of reflection journal question 5: Who should be responsible for selecting the classroom assignments, teachers or students?

Figure 19 shows the comparison of responses given regarding responsibility in choosing classroom assignments. In August 2001, 58% of the students surveyed feel teachers should be responsible for selecting classroom assignments compared to 22% of the students in December 2001. This represents a decrease of 36%. Students selecting assignments was preferred by 36% of the students in the pre survey, whereas 63% of the students give this response in the post survey. Both teachers and students being responsible for selecting assignments is the response given by 6% of the students in the pre survey compared to 15% of the students in the post survey. This shows an increase of 9%.

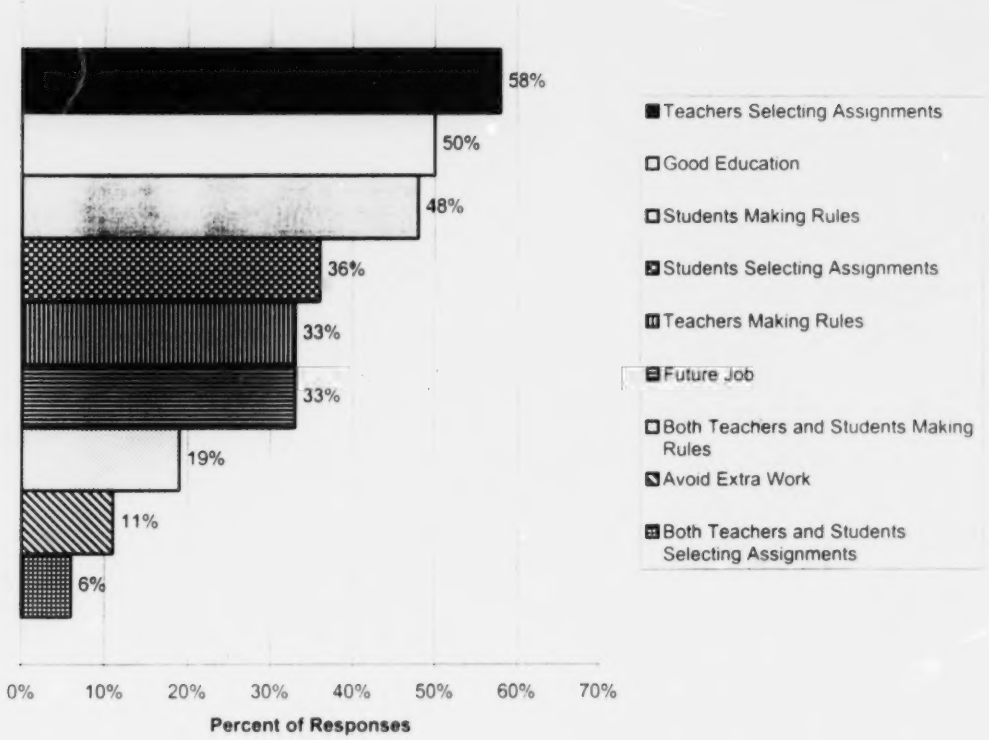

Figure 20. Rank order of students' priorities in school, August 2001.

Figure 20 shows the ranking of ideas or situations that students indicated were of value to them in the attitude survey administered in August 2001. The results show that 58% of the students feel teachers should be responsible for selecting academic assignments. This was the highest-ranking response in the survey. Of the students surveyed, 50% feel a good education is the main reason for attending school, and 48% of the students feel that should be responsible for making the classroom rules. Only 36% of the students believe they should have a part in selecting assignments. Teachers making the rules and preparation for a future job received an equal number of

responses with 33% of the students indicating these ideas were important to them. Teachers and students working together to create the classroom rules was preferred by 19% of the students, and avoiding extra work was a reason stated by 11% of the students when asked why daily attendance at school is important. The response that appeared the fewest number of times in the attitude survey was the idea of teachers and students working collaboratively to select assignment. The response was given by 6% of the students.

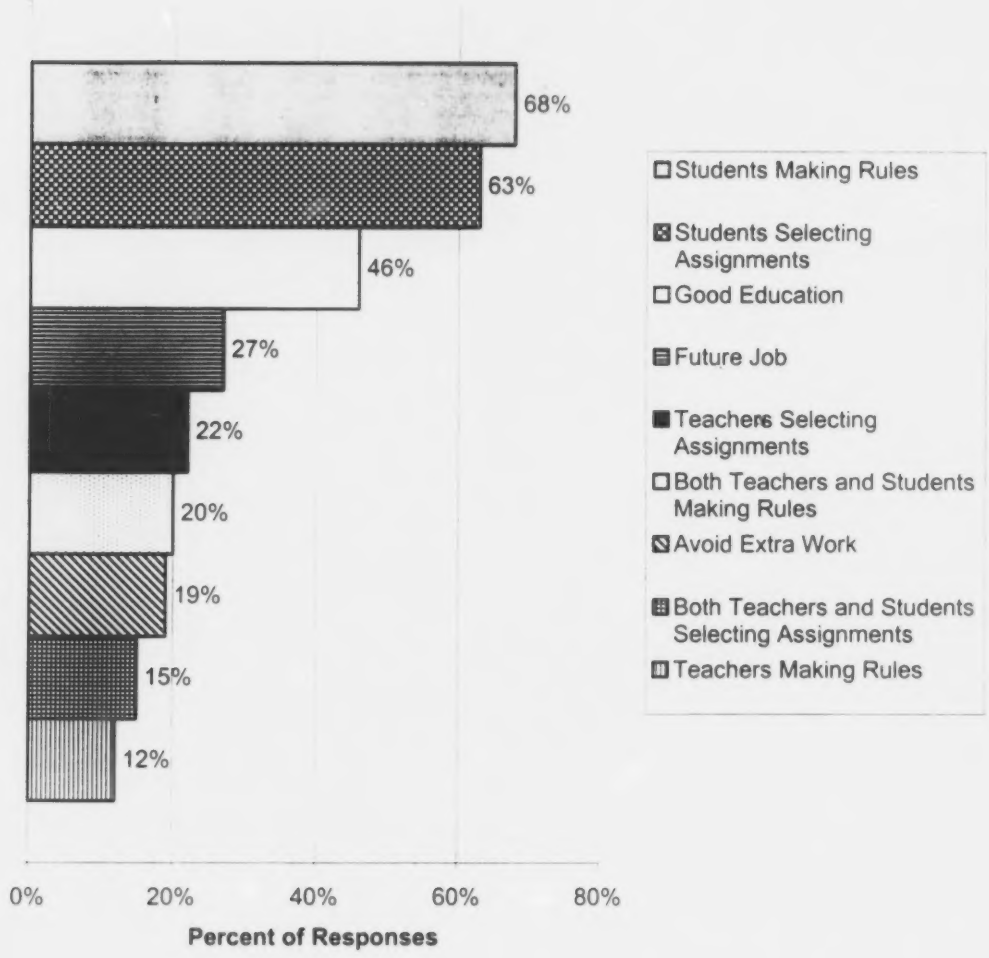

Figure 21. Rank order of students' priorities in school, December 2001.

Figure 21 shows the ranking of ideas or situations students indicated were of value to them in the post-attitude survey administered in December 2001. The results of this ranking show the number one priority for students after the implementation was having a voice in the creation of classroom rules. This response was received by 68% of the students. Both teachers and students creating the rules was preferred by 20% of

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the students, whereas only 12% of the students wanted this to be done exclusively by the teacher. This was the lowest ranking priority for the students. Students also indicated a desire to have a part in selecting classroom assignments, with 63% of the students providing this response. Only 22% of the students felt teachers should have to sole responsibility for selecting assignments, and 15% of the students stated that both the teacher and students should take part in this process. A good education was a priority for 46% of the students, 27% indicated future job security as a reason for school being important, and 19% of the students stated avoiding extra work as a key reason for daily attendance at school.

When comparing Figure 20 and Figure 21, results show students changed their perceptions of how things should be done in the classroom with the post survey indicating a desire for student empowerment. In the pre survey, 40% of the students felt they wanted a part in creating the classroom rules compared to 68% of the students who felt this was important after the implementation. This shows an increase of 20%. Likewise, the percent of students who felt creating classroom rules was the teacher's responsibility dropped considerably from August to December. In August 33% of the students gave this responsibility to the teachers compared to only 12% in December. This reflects a decrease of 21%. When selecting assignments, in August 36% of the students indicated a desire to be involved in the process, whereas 63% of the students stated this preference in December. An increase of 27% is shown. Teachers having the sole responsibility for selecting assignments was preferred by 58% of the students

in the pre survey compared to only 22% of the students in the post survey. This reflects a decrease of 36%.

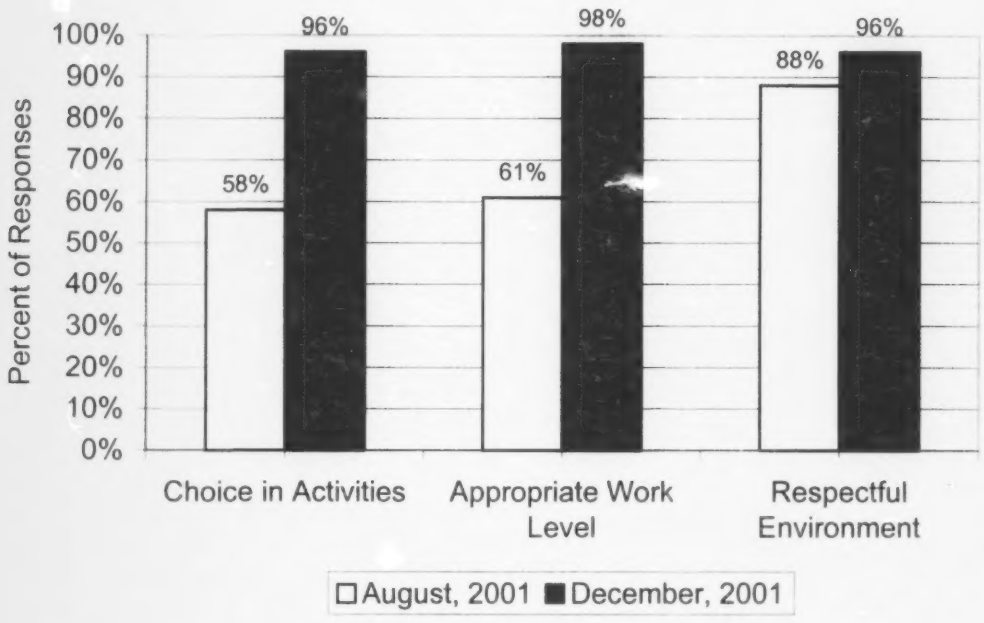

Figure 22: Comparison of student attitude survey.

Figure 22 shows the comparison of the results of the student attitude survey given in August 2001 and December 2001. The pre survey was administered prior to the introduction of the democratic classroom. Questions were grouped into three categories: having a choice in academic activities, school work given at an appropriate level, and the existence of a respectful environment. In August 2001, 58% of the students felt they had been given a choice in academic assignments, compared to 96% of the students who believed this to be true in December 2001. Of the students surveyed, 61% responded in August that they felt their schoolwork was

at an appropriate level to meet their needs, whereas 98% of the students indicated this was accurate in December. An increase of 37% is shown. Students indicated in both the pre and post surveys that a respectful environment existed. The results show 88% of the students in the pre survey and 96% of the students in the post survey indicated they experienced respectful classrooms. This represents an increase of 8%.

Part of this intervention was to allow academic choice in the classroom. Students completed a survey to determine their strongest learning style. They then were provided activities that allowed them to demonstrate their understanding through various means. The results of the survey and choices made by the students are shown in Figure 23 and Figure 24.

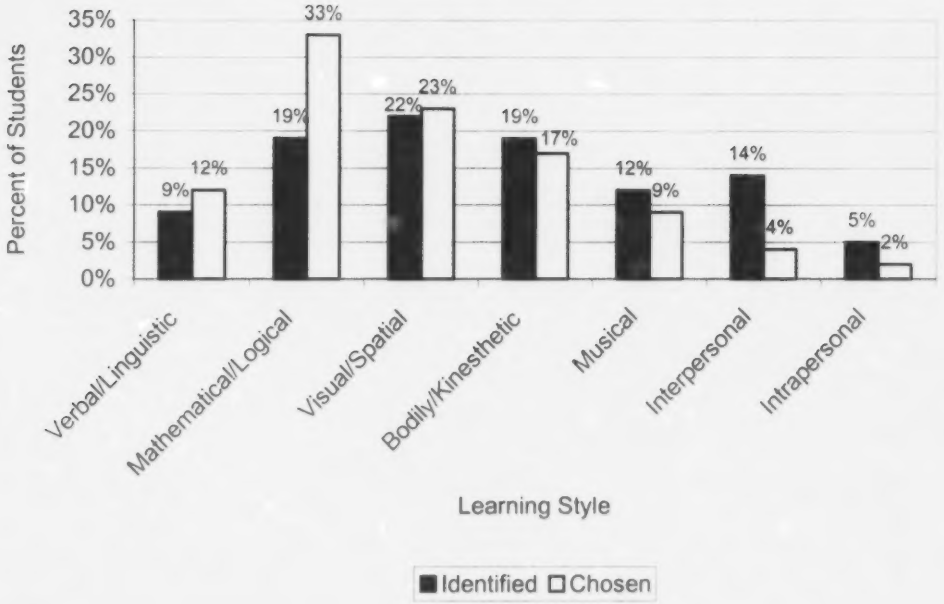

Figure 23. Comparison of students' identified intelligence to their choice of assignment.

Figure 23 shows the percent of students identified in each intelligence and the percent of the students choosing the corresponding assignment. In four of the seven multiple intelligences activities offered, the percentage of students choosing the assignment exceeded the number of students associating themselves with that intelligence. However, in only three intelligences were the percentages of students choosing the assignment less than the percentages of those identified. For the verbal/linguistic intelligence, 9% of the students identified with this learning style, and 12% of the students chose the corresponding assignment. Nineteen percent of the students were identified as mathematical/logical compared to the 33% of the

students who made this choice in the assignment. Visual/spatial was the intelligence 22% of the students felt best described their learning style, and 23% of the students chose the corresponding assignment. Nineteen percent of the students were identified as bodily/kinesthetic compared to the 17% of the students who participated in the related activity. In the musical intelligence, 12% of the students identified with this learning style, whereas 9% of the students chose the musical activity. Fourteen percent of the students felt the interpersonal intelligence best described their learning style, but only 4% of the students chose to take part in the interpersonal activity. The intrapersonal intelligence was the strongest learning style for only 5% of the students with 2% of the students selecting the intrapersonal assignment.

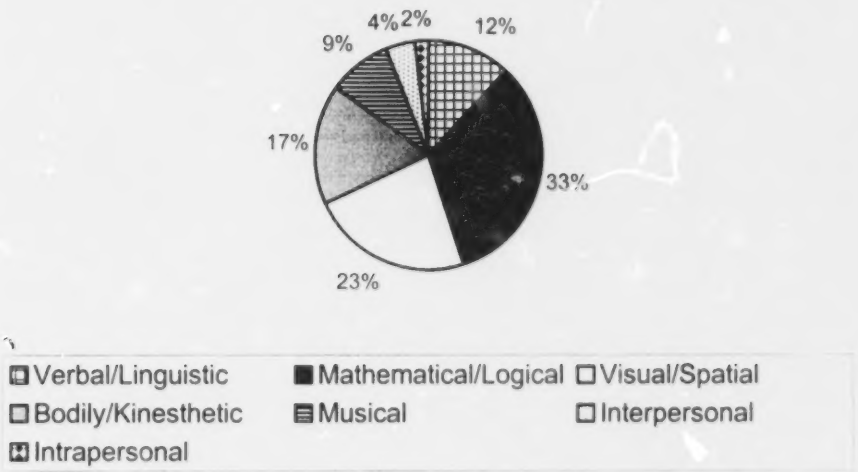

Figure 24. Percent of students choosing each multiple intelligence activity.

Figure 24 shows the percentage of students choosing each of the multiple intelligences activities. The results show that 12% of the students chose the activity for the verbal/linguistic intelligence, whereas 88% of the students chose the other options. The 88% was distributed among six intelligences. The highest number of students, 33%, participated in the mathematical/logical activity, with the second most popular selection belonging to the visual/spatial intelligence, with 23% of the students. Seventeen percent of the students participated in the bodily/kinesthetic activity, and 9% of the students felt the musical activity would best meet their needs. A small number of students chose the interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences, with 4% and 2% respectively.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the data, the most powerful results were in the area of student empowerment and student choice, which were key components of the teacher-researchers' solution strategy. Students felt strongly that they were a part of the decision-making process regarding class rules and choice of assignments. In the post-attitude survey, the number of students who felt they should be responsible for creating classroom rules increased significantly, while the number of students who believed that teachers should solely be responsible for these decisions dropped. This was accomplished through restructuring the classroom from a teacher-dominated environment to a more student-centered environment.

Student choice also showed compelling results. A large percentage of students indicated that they no longer wanted the teacher to have sole responsibility

for selecting all assignments. It was the initial hope of the teacher-researchers that, given the choice, students would be willing to move away from the standard verbal-linguistic style of assignments and begin taking divergent paths toward understanding the curriculum. Students were presented with Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, and various activities were designed to show each intelligence. Students were then encouraged to select activities they thought would capitalize on their skills. At first, some students were overwhelmed with all of their choices, covering eight multiple intelligences and tiered activities for differentiation, so the teacher-researchers concluded that initially only four intelligences be covered at one time. Through this approach, students would have a greater opportunity to find various paths representing their strengths. Also noted by the teacher-researchers was, that when given the choice of assignments, only 12% of the students choose verbal/linguistic, which is the most commonly taught intelligence in schools today. When the students began to recognize their areas of strengths, and chose the learning styles that suited them best, observations of student interest and enthusiasm increased significantly. Based on projects presented by students, greater comprehension of material covered was evident.

Character education was included in the 16 weeks of intervention, and it was observed in the daily classroom meetings that students increased their ability to listen to one another's ideas and suggestions, became more aware of following the rules they had created, and increased the level of participation.

The teacher-researchers had hoped that attendance would improve based on the positive feelings associated with empowerment, but the data showed a neutral effect. There was neither an increase nor a decrease in the absentee rate of the targeted sixth grade students.

Based on the research and data gathered, the teacher-researchers recommend the following strategies be implemented in order to have a democratic classroom and empower students. The teacher-researches have concluded that democratically run, student-centered classrooms are more productive and offer greater opportunities for students to practice the philosophy of democracy, which they can carry into adulthood. Daily classroom meetings, lasting approximately 20 minutes, will provide the vehicle for character education, decision-making, and increased communication skills. Choice in assignments, based on students' strengths, interests, and talent, should be offered in all subject areas when possible. Student empowerment does not mean teacher powerlessness. Instead, it means student-teacher partnership.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Student Reflection Journal
Student Attitude Survey
Teacher Attitude Survey

Name_____

Reflection Journal

1. Do you think it is important to come to school on a daily basis? Why or why not? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	4. Do you think teachers should select the rules for the class to follow, or do you think it would be helpful to have the class help make these rules? Why or why not? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
2. What are the things that make it enjoyable for you to come to school? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ 1. How do you feel about having class meetings to discuss group goals, class activities, and class problems? Do you think it would be beneficial to you? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	5. Would you like to have a choice in selecting assignments, or would you feel more comfortable if the teacher selected your assignments? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ Date Administered: _____

Student ID Number _____ Male Female

Student Attitude Survey

Please answer the following questions about your classroom experience this year.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. My teachers encourage me to express my thoughts.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. I feel my opinions were respected by my teacher and classmates.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. I participate in classroom discussions without the fear of being put-down.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. I ask questions without worrying about teacher criticism (for example, "Why weren't you listening.")	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. I feel comfortable in the classroom.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Generally, I have a choice in selecting assignments that interested me.	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. My classrooms are exciting places to learn.	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. I feel students were treated fairly and equally.	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. I feel my class works together to solve problems (put-downs, cutting in line, etc.)	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. I help to plan events for my class (field-trips, a cooperative group activity, the next unit, etc.)	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. My teachers help me when I need it.	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. My class helps decide how projects will be graded.	_____	_____	_____	_____

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13. I feel the classroom work was just right for my ability. _____ _____ _____ _____

14. I feel the classroom work was hard for me to understand. _____ _____ _____ _____

15. I feel the classroom work was challenging. _____ _____ _____ _____

Teacher Attitude Survey

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	A democratic classroom will not lead to additional discipline problems.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2.	Enough teacher planning time is available to make a democratic classroom work.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	Classroom meetings will not interfere with instructional time, but is a part of instructional time.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	Students will benefit from the experience.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	Student expectations in a democratic classroom will be realistic.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	Students will learn to make positive and informed decisions.	_____	_____	_____	_____
7.	Parent will support the concept of a democratic classroom.	_____	_____	_____	_____
8.	Administrators will support teachers who are implementing a democratic classroom.	_____	_____	_____	_____

Administered: _____

Appendix B

Weekly Lesson Plans

Week 1

Objective:

- Determine students' previous experiences with democracy in the classroom, decision-making, choices in assignments, empowerment, and problem solving.
- Collect quantitative data that includes open-form questions for lengthy replies.

Strategies:

- Administer student attitude survey
- Administer reflection journal

Week 2

Objective:

- Working together, create a class constitution that serves the good of the classroom community.
- Help students learn to think about rules, and develop competence at making good rules themselves.
- Create a classroom partnership.

Strategies:

- In small groups, brainstorm ideas of the perfect classroom where they would be comfortable and safe.
- Come up with class rules (encourage internal rather than external control to foster voluntary compliance with rules and laws.)
- Help students create logical consequences for rule infractions to help them gain self-control, understand why their behavior was inappropriate, and make reparations.
- Create a class constitution include a vision statement.
- Have students categorize their rules to place under a "broader" spectrum so all inappropriate behaviors do not have to be listed. Encourage everyone's participation so they know their thoughts are valued.

Class Constitution

Number 1:
Be honest, do not cheat or steal. Be loyal and stand by a person in need. (Trust-worthiness)
Number 2:
Treat everyone with respect. Appreciate everyone's culture. Appreciate everyone's ideas. No putdowns. Work out all problems in our class meetings or through student intervention. Be tolerant of everyone's differences. No inappropriate language. Don't talk when the teachers are talking. (Respect)
Number 3:
Hand your assignments in on time. Put in you best effort. Do your fair share of work in cooperative groups. (Responsibility)
Number 4:

Take turns. Raise your hand if you want to speak. Do not interrupt when others are speaking. Listen to other's ideas. (Fairness)

Number 5:
Be helpful to those who need assistance. Don't hurt the feelings of others. (Caring)
Number 6:
Take care of the classroom. Clean up after yourself. Participate. (Citizenship)
Others:

- Have outdoor recess twice a week.
- No homework over weekends, unless you have not finished what was due during the week. Weekend homework for long term projects determined by student.
- Spirit days on Friday
- Student of the week conducts class meetings
- Unfinished or missing assignments:
  - Late one day, grade reduced and note home
  - Late two days, grade reduced and note home
  - Late three days, grade zero, assignment still due, teacher calls home

Week 3

Objective:

- Create daily classroom meetings emphasizing interactive discussion among class members.
- Improve through regular face-to-face communication, students' ability to listen respectfully; provide a forum for student opinions; and develop the attitude and skills needed to take part in democratic decision-making.

Strategies

- Discuss the goals and varieties of classroom meetings (planning, problem-solving, academic issues, suggestion box, etc.)
- Establish and practice daily routine: Form a circle; create an agenda; pick a leader, facilitator, and recorder.
- Discuss how to give and receive compliments and appreciation.
- Establish rules for good talking and listening.
- Learn how to close a meeting, and evaluate pluses and minuses.

(Daily classroom meetings, continued)

Week 4

Objective:

- Learn how to establish an agenda for class meetings.
- Discuss the difference between win-win solutions (everyone experiences power) and win-lose solutions (power in the hands of 1-2 people.)
- Learn interpersonal skills: the ability to learn through listening, communicating, negotiating, cooperating, sharing, and empathizing.
- Dramatize common conflicts, such as two children refusing to let a third join their play.

Strategies:

- State the purpose and goals of the meeting to reinforce establishing an agenda.
- Review the rules for "good talking and listening."
- Pair up students who will discuss the problem or topic under consideration.
- Pose a problem or question: For example: What can we do to help a student who is being the victim of name-calling on the playground?"
- Practice having personal time to think about the question individually.
- Have partners share thoughts, then have whole-group discussion.
- Review the win-win strategy.
- Encourage interaction, model good listening, and paraphrase opposing viewpoints, record ideas.

Democratic Classroom

Evidence shows that students have a desire to be empowered in the classroom through the decision making process, choice in assignments, and creating classroom guidelines.

Classroom Meetings

- Forum for students' thoughts
- Equal encouragement
- Foster character education, respect, responsibility, inquiry
- Builds relationships along with mutual respect for others
- Support structure/nurture: appreciation, compliments, reflections, sharing
- Democratic group decision making:
- goal-setting, rule-setting, feedback, and evaluation
- alternative learning
- planning: group projects and activities, field-trips,
- Problem solving/sticky situations: fairness, individual and group solutions
- Academic issues
- Builds a sense of belonging and community
- Contributes to the development of social and cognitive skills
- Established agenda

Academic Choices

- Students learn through their strengths: multiple intelligences, differentiation, etc.
- Prepares students to participate in a democratic culture
- Understand democracy balanced with societal responsibilities
- Students practice exercising their rights: express their ideas, opinions, and suggestions
- Bridges gap between school knowledge and real-world
- Affects academic achievement
- Intrinsic motivation, positive attitude
- Parameters provided, within which decisions can be negotiated

- Education more relevant
- Power struggles between teacher/student minimized
- Contributes positively to self-concept
- Student at the center of learning process
- Students must think strategically and reflectively

Week 5

Objective:

- Introduce students to experiential learning strategies:
- Multiple Intelligences: Visual/Spatial, Verbal/Linguistic, Logical/Mathematical,
- Musical/Rhythmic, Bodily/Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, and Naturalist
- Integrated Curriculum: Themes, Problem-Based Learning; Projects, Case Studies

Strategies:

- Conduct activities to allow children to discover their strengths. Allow students to discover through activities "What are the types of multiple intelligence?" Present practical suggestions pertaining to each learning style and encourage students to choose activities that best represent their way of learning, rather than trying to be like everyone else. Appreciate differences.
- Present a novel study with choices of learning strategies including multiple intelligences, tiered assignments for differentiation, and experiential learning.

Multiple Intelligence Inventory

1. I have a good vocabulary for my age.
2. I ask a lot of questions about how things work.
3. I have strong personal opinions and beliefs.
4. I like to participate in physical activities or sports.
5. I enjoy socializing with my peers.
6. I can easily compute numbers in my head.
7. I remember melodies of songs.
8. I enjoy art activities.
9. I keep my notebook, locker, bedroom closet, drawers, etc. organized.
10. I am satisfied when left alone to study or play.
11. I like to listen to music while studying or working.
12. I enjoy word games.
13. I enjoy belonging to clubs, committees, or other organizations.
14. I often see clear visual images when I close my eyes.
15. I understand patterns, categories, and relationships.
16. I learn best by "doing", moving, touching, or acting.
17. I am a good speller.
18. I like to be leader.
19. I am independent and self-directed.
20. I have a good singing voice.
21. I read maps, charts, and diagrams more easily than text.
22. I enjoy playing chess, checkers, or other strategy games.
23. I love to take things apart and put them back together again.
24. I enjoy pursuing interests and hobbies alone.
25. I unconsciously hum to myself.
26. I enjoy jigsaw puzzles and mazes.
27. I like to play group games such as Monopoly or individual activities such as solitaire.
28. I am good at telling stories or jokes.
29. I enjoy movement and dances.
30. I have a good memory for names, places, dates, or trivia.
31. I excel in one or more sports.
32. I have good judgment in social situations.
33. I like to read books and magazines related to science.
34. I am confident and have high self-esteem.
35. I can study better when listening to music.
36. I am able to draw realistic pictures of people and objects.
37. I have a dramatic way of expressing myself.
38. I have a good sense of direction; I rarely get lost.
39. I am good at making speeches and presentations before groups.
40. I like to collect and organize things such as stamps, coins, baseball cards, etc.

41. I can tell you when music sounds off-key or disturbing in some other way
42. I think on a more abstract or conceptual level than my peers.
43. I have a good sense of empathy or concern for others.
44. I am concerned about self-improvement and health.
45. I use music for self-expression.
46. My friends seek me out for advice or to listen to when they have problems.
47. I prefer working alone to working with others.
48. I enjoy working on logic puzzles or brainteasers.
49. I show skill in a craft (i.e. woodworking, sewing, mechanics) or good fine-motor coordination in other ways.
50. I enjoy reading, writing, and listening.
51. I like to exercise and workout.
52. I enjoy math class.
53. I doodle on worksheets, workbooks, or other materials.
54. I get involved with helping people.
55. I appreciate different kinds of music.
56. I can mimic other people's gestures or mannerisms.

Adapted from Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom, Thomas Armstrong, 1994.

Revving the Engine, Long, Austin, & Bowen, 1994.

Walk Two Moons

Objective: Students will select a reading comprehension strategy the will aid in the following:

- Integrating previous experience
- Responding to a relatively deep understand of the material
- Responding with consistency and logic

Instructional Strategies:

- Instinct (the importance of…)
- Linking background to text
- Predicting
- Organizing ideas into patterns
- Inferring
- Generalizing

Instructional Procedures:

- Students will select from daily journal activities (see next page)
- Students will scrutinize, observe, question, and making meaning of the dialog in Walk Two Moon, and connect it to real-life events

Other activities associated with this novel:

- Figurative Language
- Analyzing proverbs
- Critical questions

Walk Two Moons

Select from the following daily journal activities:

Story on a Rope (Visual/Spatial)
Read each chapter.
Using 5 x 7 index cards, crayons or markers, draw the main idea of the chapter.
Share the drawing with the class.
Attach each card to a large piece of yarn, one per chapter.
At the end of the book, all the sketched should then be stapled to a book and words may be added.

KWL chart (Logical/Mathematical)
After each chapter, complete a KWL chart.
KWL: Identify what you know is happening.
Decide what you want to know.
When ready, complete what you have learned.

"E"asing On Down the Road (Musical/Rhythmic)
Read each chapter.
Create a song, poem, rap, jingle, or poem (8 lines) that describes what a main character is feeling (happiness, apprehension, doubt, anger, grief, etc.)

Journal and Story-Telling (Verbal/Linguistic)
Read each chapter.
Keep a journal describing your feeling about what is happening to the characters.
At the end of the book, be prepared to act out a key part of the story, or find a story you would like to tell and present it to the class.

Journaling and Creative Dramatics (Bodily/Kinesthetic)
Read each chapter.
Keep a journal describing your feeling about what is happening to the characters.
At the end of the book, present a "game" that the class can enjoy that you know Salamanca and Phoebe would also enjoy. The game must be structured, have rules, and be original.

Journal and Self-discovery (Intrapersonal)
Read each chapter.
Create a character in Walk Two Moons that represents you (perhaps you are Salamanca's sister or another best friend.) Rewrite parts of the chapter including your character.

Venn Diagram (Interpersonal)

Read each chapter.

Interview two (2) other students and complete a Venn diagram comparing your feelings about each chapter with theirs. You may not interview the same person twice.

Weeks 6 & 7

Objective:

- Continue with novel study using choices of learning strategies.
- Promote reflection strategies to allow students to link new ideas to other ideas already in their experiences.
- Help students discover that learning is linked to personal relevance; constructing knowledge; fostering deep understanding, and extrapolating generalizations (transfer of knowledge.)

Strategies:

- Review reflection strategies: personal relevance, knowledge construction, deep understanding, and generalizations.
- Introduce transfer of learning.
- Introduce metacognitive reflection (transferring the learning from one context to the next.)
- Journal daily and complete KWL strategy sheet.

Weeks 8 & 9

Social Studies Unit:

Objective:

- Describe Europe's main geographic feature
- Place the Middle Ages in time
- Explain feudalism
- Explain the influences of the church in the Middle Ages
- Explain the causes and effects of the Crusades
- Review the Middle Ages unit information with a differentiated activity

Strategies:

- Students will be pre-tested to determine placement in tired assignment activities.
- Enrichment – students will answer higher-level questions to dig deeper into their topics.
- Maintenance – Students will meet with their groups to problem-solve and answer higher-level questions.
- Guided Group Instruction – Students will meet with the teacher to review information about this unit of study.
- All groups participate in a "cubing" activity.

Unit Name – The Middle Ages

Objective of Unit –

- Describe Europe's main geographic features.
- Place the Middle Ages in time.
- Explain feudalism.
- Explain the influences of the church in the Middle Ages.
- Explain the causes and effects of the Crusades.
- Review the Middle Ages unit information with a differentiated activity.
-

Learning Standards –

- 16 B 3c (W) – Identify causes and effects of European feudalism and the emergence of nation states between 500 and 1500 CE.
- 17C 3c – Analyze how human processes influence settlement patterns including migration and population growth.

Baseline Assessment-

- The baseline assessment will be a pre-posttest from the book.

Curriculum Compacting-

- After taking the pre-posttest, children will be put into groups by how well they scored on this test. The high group will be given questions that will encourage higher level thinking skills and problem solving. The middle group will also be asked higher-level questions to encourage deeper thinking. The low group's questions will be designed to give them a basic review of the highlights of this unit.

1. Pre-test (baseline date) All students will take a pre-posttest from the book.
2. Differentiated Learning Groups – From this baseline data the teacher will divide the class into three groups of students. (Those who understand most of the material, students who understand some of the material, and students who need the most review on the Middle Ages unit of study.)
3. Direct Instruction – The whole class will be taught basic concepts of the Middle Ages.
4. Guided Instruction – The students who received the lowest scores on the pretest will meet in a group with the teacher for the purpose of reteaching some of the material and helping them to find information for success in working on their cubes.
5. Cubing – Students will be able to use their notes and discussion with their team members to help them successfully complete their part of the cube.

- Enrichment –Students who scored well on the test will have a chance to answer higher-level questions and to do a little extra research into topics of the Middle Ages.
- Maintenance – This group of students will have higher level questions but also information processing discussions to encourage children who are a little unsure of themselves.
- Guided instruction group – This group will be given questions that will review the basic information presented in this unit. The teacher will sit in on the students' discussion time to help any students that are having problems find the information to successfully complete their portion of the cube.

Different teaching methods.
Direct instruction, higher level questions, fat/skinny questions, problem solving, student grouping, graphic organizers, multiple intelligences, research, learning stations, novel units, problem based learning, Socratic dialogue.

Choice – paper, centers, projects, games –

- I chose to use cubing projects.

Whole group instructional activities –
The whole group activities will include direct instruction and all of the students will participate in many different learning stations. I am also asking all children in my class to read a novel that takes place in the Middle Ages. During all of the activities, the children will be asked to keep a journal consisting of vocabulary and interesting facts that they learned from each day's activities.

Each child will take a pre-posttest. They will then work on the cubing activity for a review of the unit. A posttest will be given after this activity.

Concepts to be taught –
Where the Middle Ages falls in history.
The geography of Europe.
Feudalism
The Crusades
The church in the Middle Ages

Sources –
The Eastern Hemisphere – The World Around Us by Macmillan. This is the current textbook for social studies.
Medieval Times to Today by Prentice Hall.
The Middle Ages – Independent Learning Unit by A Good Apple Publication for Grades 4-8.

Three Instructional Groups

- Students will be divided into 1) understands most of the material, 2) understands some of the material, and 3) doesn't understand the material and needs to have some reteaching experiences.

1. Enrichment group – (Red Group)

Goal: The enrichment group will go to their groups to problem solve and answer the higher level questions to dig deeper into the topic.

- After taking the pre-posttest, the students receiving scores of 90% and above will be put in this group.
- Students will read their questions and have a group discussion on to how best answer each of the questions.
- Students will take notes on each of the questions.
- Students will choose two of the sides that they would feel best in completing

  Assessment: Students will be graded by a rubric and a final posttest.

2. Maintenance group – (White Group)

Goal: The Maintenance group will meet in their groups to problem solve and answer higher-level questions.

- After taking the pre-posttest, the students receiving scores of 75% -89% will be put in this group.
- Students will read their questions and have a group discussion on to best answer each of the questions.
- Students will take notes on each of the questions.
- Children will choose two of the sides that they would feel most confident in completing.

  Assessment: Students will be graded by a rubric an a final posttest.

3. Guided Instruction Group – (Blue Group)

Goal: The Guided Group will meet with the teacher to review basic information about this unit of study.

- After taking the pre-posttest, the students receiving scores of 74% and below will be put in this group.
- Students will receive more direct instruction from the teacher.
- Students will read their questions and have a group discussion with the teacher on to how to best answer each of the questions. The teacher will help students look up the answers in the text and in their notes and guide the discussion so that the children can learn the basic objectives of this unit of study.
- Students will take notes on each of the questions.
- Each child will choose two of the sides that they would feel most confident in completing.

CUBING INSTRUCTIONS FOR ENRICHMENT GROUP – (Red Group)

1. Read over the questions.
2. Each person is to answer or find the answers to each of the questions.
3. While questions are being answered, each person in the group should be taking notes.
4. Decide which two sides each person will complete.
5. Read over the rubric so that you know what is expected of your team.
6. Do your job.
7. Check with teammates to see if there is anything you might have left out.
8. Fill out the student reflection sheet that tells me how you felt about this project and what you felt you learned. Do you think you will be more successful on the final test because of this project?

QUESTIONS

SIDE ONE: Title, topics of importance listed, time line of important events in the Middle Ages (At least 4)

SIDE TWO: Draw a physical map of Europe in the Middle Ages including important cities of the Middle Ages.

SIDE THREE: Explain how feudalism protected people during dangerous times of the Middle Ages. Do you feel feudalism was fair to all? Why or why not?

SIDE FOUR: What were the contributions of the Christian Church during the Middle Ages and why were they important? Why were they dangerous?

SIDE FIVE: Explain how the Crusades caused lasting changes in Europe. List the pros and cons of how the people were affected politically and economically.

SIDE SIX: Bubble the economic changes that happened in Europe after the Crusades. If you could use a color to explain the period of the Middle Ages, what color would it be and why?

CUBING FOR THE MAINTENANCE GROUP
(White Group)

1. Read over the question.
2. Each person is to answer or find the answers to each of the questions.
3. While questions are being answered, each person in the group should be taking notes.
4. Decide which two sides each person will complete.
5. Read over the rubric so that you know what is expected of your team.
6. Do your job.
7. Check with teammates to see if there is anything you might have left out.
8. Fill out the student reflection sheet that tells me how you felt about this project and what you felt you learned. Do you think you will be more successful on the final test because of this project?

QUESTIONS

SIDE ONE: Title, topics of importance listed, timeline of at least four important events during the Middle Ages.

SIDE TWO: Compare our geography with that of Europe's.

SIDE THREE: Explain why feudalism was an important part of the growth of the Middle Ages.

SIDE FOUR: Explain why the church was so important in everyday life of the people of the Middle Ages.

SIDE FIVE: Describe in detail the effect of the Crusades. Reflect on the crusades, do you think the good outweighed the bad?

SIDE SIX: Create a mini word collage on the Middle Ages.

CUBING INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE GUIDED GROUP (Blue Group)

1. Review with teacher the basic topics of the Middle Ages.
2. Read over the questions.
3. Each person is to answer or find the answers to each of the questions. The teacher will help students in this discussion.
4. While questions are being answered, each person in the group should be taking notes.
5. Decide which two sides each person will complete.
6. Read over the rubric so that you know what is expected of your team.
7. Do your job.
8. Check with teammates to see if there is anything you might have left out.
9. Fill out the student reflection sheet that tells me how you felt about this project and what you felt you learned. Do you think you will be more successful on the final test because of this project?

QUESTIONS

SIDE ONE: Title, topics of importance in the Middle Ages listed, timeline of at least four events that happened during the Middle Ages.

SIDE TWO: List the characteristics of the geography of Europe.

SIDE THREE: Explain Feudalism.

SIDE FOUR: Tell me about the church in the Middle Ages.

SIDE FIVE: What were the Crusades? What was the outcome of the Crusades?

SIDE SIX: Draw a picture of a person wearing clothes of the Middle Ages.

Weeks 10 & 11

Objective:

- Begin The Phantom Tollbooth novel study.
- Students will build awareness of feelings.
- Students will continue learning the MI intelligences by experiencing activities representing each intelligence using empathy as a theme.
- Students will be introduced to the concept of "emotional" intelligence.

Strategies:

- Brainstorm as a class what the world would be like with constant rain for seven years. How would it look? Feel? Smell? Sound? How would life be different? If possible, dim the lights and play a recording of rain showers and storms. Reflect on their reactions.
- Present several activities for students to choose from representing the seven intelligences. The theme should be empathy.
- Present and discuss the five major components of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.
- Begin social problem solving in class meetings remembering empathy skills, group support, etc. Examples:
  1. Students who do not like to work with others.
  2. Students who don't care.
  3. Students who dominate the class.
  4. Students who cannot get along with others.

SPEAKING 'METAPHORICALLY"

This unit introduces students to figurative language through the novel, Phantom Tollbooth, and to the various types of metaphors. Specifically: simile, metaphor, personification, onomatopoeia, hyperbole, personification, imagery, alliteration, and idioms will be used in various poems and writing activities.

Lesson #1 (1 day)

Similes

Students will:

- Through examples, learn that a simile is a particular type of metaphor that speaks of something as similar to something else.
- Find the pattern of the use of "like" or "as."
- Using The Phantom Tollbooth, find examples of similes.
- Begin creating a list of vocabulary words from their novel that they do not understand. (throughout unit)
- Using one theme, create and present a six-line poem, using simile as a poetic device.

Lesson #2 (1 day)

Metaphor

Students will:

- Through examples, learn that a metaphor may be a particular word, phrase, or sentence, which suggests a similarity between two things, without using "like" or "as."
- Given metaphors, work with a partner to explain what is being compared and how they are similar.
- Using The Phantom Tollbooth, find examples of metaphors.
- Create and present a six-line poem using metaphor as a poetic device.

Lesson 3 (2 days)

Imagery

Students will:

- Define imagery to understand how it operates in writing.
- Read short statements and describe the image that it created in their minds.
- Working with a partner, determine if the piece of writing contains "strong" or "weak" imagery, and see a relationship between strong imagery and figurative language.
- Using imagery, create an individual world that they would like to visit to get them out of the "doldrums."
- Develop and present a concrete poem with a strong visual component.

Lesson 4 - (1 day)

Alliteration

Students will:

- Given examples of alliterative sentences, students will practice creating sentences of their own.
- In groups, create one sentence using the name of each member of their group.
- Using alliteration, create a tongue twister and practice reciting others.

Lesson 5 (throughout unit)

Personification

Students will:

- Read passages provided and discover the meaning of personification.
- Read statements and have them replace underlined words with human actions.
- Discover that personification adds variety and punch to writing.
- Find examples of personification in The Phantom Tollbooth.
- Working in groups, begin charting various examples of figurative language in previous chapters read.

Lesson 6 (1-2 days)

Onomatopoeia

Students will:
- Given examples of onomatopoeia, practice finding words that sound like what they mean.
- Rewrite sentences to make them sound alive.
- Learn about "diamante" poems and their patterns.
- Using personification and onomatopoeia make a forest "come alive" in a diamante.

Lesson 7 (1 day)

Idioms

Students will:
- Using Salvabear Dali's paintings of idioms, identify the correct expression.
- Draw a picture of an idiom and its literal translation.

Lesson 8 (2 days)

Hyperbole

Students will:
- Recalling the study of tall tales, learn about hyperbole.
- Given poems by Robert Burns and Ray Wood, discover how authors use hyperbole in creative and imaginative ways.
- In small groups, create a rap using hyperbole.

Lesson 9 (2 days)

- Vocabulary

- Students will:
- Learn that interesting language learning can take place using "cheers."
- Spelling, rhyming elements, and understanding shortened words to accommodate rhythm should be discussed.
- In small groups, discuss the vocabulary words they were unfamiliar with and create a cheer using those words and definitions. They should incorporate rhythm, pauses, and expressions.

Lesson 10 (5-6 days)

Poetry

Students will:

- Define poetry and understand how it operates as a literary genre distinct from fiction.
- Define pattern and understand how it operates in Haiku, Cinquain and diamante poems.
- Gain an overview of the principal literary elements of poetry.
- Gain an overview of the principal aspects of pattern in poetry: patterns of meaning, patterns of repetition, and concrete poetry.
- Create and present to classmates the following poems: diamante, Haiku, Cinquain, and couplets.
- Choose one of their poems and give a dramatic reading

Enrichment Activities

- Integrate Language Arts and Social Studies by identifying figures of speech that were taken literally during the Middle Ages.
- Investigate how differences of interpretation can occur when words that are used metaphorically are not quite understood.
- Research euphemisms and how they are used.

Proverbs

A *proverb* is a brief saying that presents a truth or some bit of useful information. It is usually based on common sense or practical experience. The effect of a proverb is to make the wisdom it tells seem to be obvious. The same proverb often occurs among several different peoples (Chinese, African, English, etc.) True proverbs are sayings that have been passed down from generation to generation primarily by word of mouth. They may also be put into written form as in Benjamin Franklin's Poor Richard's Almanac, Chaucer's Canterbury Tales (written in the 1300's) and the Old Testament.

With a partner, try to interpret the following proverbs:

❑ Ability is what you're capable of doing...

❑ Motivation determines what you do...
Attitude determines how well you do it.

❑ A calm sea does not make a skilled sailor.

❑ A closed mind is like a closed book;
just a block of wood. (Chinese)

❑ A conclusion is simply the place where you got tired of thinking.

❑ A drop of ink may make a million think.

❑ A cynic is a person who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.

❑ A friend is someone who dances with you in the sunlight
and walks beside you in the shadows.

❑ A friend is someone who thinks you're a good egg
even though you're slightly cracked.

Week 12

Objective:

Prepare students for student-led parent/teacher conferences.

Reflect on student portfolios. (What have they learned, what are their strengths, weaknesses, showcase best work, relate how their items meet the curriculum standards, etc.)

Strategies:

- Review the purpose of a portfolio and types of portfolios at the beginning of the year so students may start collecting artifacts.
- Student reflection:
  - What I feel I have learned so far?
  - Which is my favorite artifact and why?
  - Which is my least favorite artifact and why?
  - What artifact will surprise my parents the most?
  - Which was the most difficult, most creative, least
  - Stimulating?
  - What do I still need to practice?
  - What help do I need from my parents and teachers?
  - What are my goals for the remainder of the year?
  - One thing I have learned about myself is.....

Week 13 & 14:

Objective:

- Students will learn the strategies of using various graphic organizers to help make their thinking discernible.
- Activate students' visual/spatial intelligence, and construct knowledge for themselves.

Strategies:

- Review the value of graphic organizers.
- Model a new organizer and how to use it by selecting a topic that is easily understood.
- Students should be given the time to practice using the graphic organizer in small groups, selecting topics of their own.
- Continue introducing graphic organizers, using one to assess what students have learned.
- Reflect on the benefits of graphic organizers.
- Individually, or with groups, create a graphic organizer to share with the class.

Weeks 15 – 16:

Objective

- Students will focus on constitutional rights and liberties focusing on issues that affect them in their day-to-day lives in school, at home, and in the community.
- Familiarize students with the **basic** principles of law through drama simulations, and a mock trial.
- Administer (post) student attitude survey and reflective journal.

Strategies:

- Review areas of civil law and its design to promote social order.
- Review the differences between civil and criminal law.
- Hold council meetings to discuss various philosophies (i.e., Does freedom of speech allow a panhandler the right to ask for money?)
- Conduct mock trials (see Lessons in the Law for Middle School) and evaluate outcomes.
- Administer student attitude survey and reflective journal.

Appendix C

Student-Led Conference Lesson Plans

Student-Led Conferences

Agenda

Introductions: Be sure to introduce your parents to the teacher. Say the names clearly and slowly.

Review Portfolio: Show materials you've collected and your teachers have included. Be sure to explain each one, and how you can learn from its results. Explain why you chose the pieces that you've included.

Compliment: This is an opportunity for your parents to admire your achievements.

Review conference reflections: Using the material you've prepared, discuss your progress in school and what is important for your teachers and adults in your life to know about you as a student. Discuss your glows and grows.

Goal Setting: Having reviewed your reflections, choose goals for improvement. Include way teachers and adults in your life can help you achieve these goals.

Parent(s)' Comments: This is an opportunity for your parents to share comments, concerns, and compliments.

Closing: Everyone signs the Plan for Success. Conference ends with handshakes and saying good-bye.

Self-Reflection Questions

What do you want to say about your work?

What do you do will in school academically?

What do you need to improve on academically?

What do you do well when you work with other students?

What do you need to improve upon when you work with other students?

On what character trait do you need to focus?

What do you need from your parents to support your school efforts?

What do you need from your teachers to support your school efforts?